POINT COUNT BIDDING

Ely Culbertson

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POINT-COUNT BIDDING

by

ELY CULBERTSON

Here's a book every bridge player has been waiting for—a definitive study of point-count bidding by the world's leading card expert. Superseding conflicting varieties, here is a simpler, revolutionary and more accurate point-count system written with indisputable Culbertson authority and clarity. It includes a complete and perfected point-count valuation for all bids; new features of 4-3-2-1-streamlined no-trump and suit-bid requirements, and new point-count rule for penalty doubles. Culbertson also sets out his formula for counting points at a glance and remembering the cards—with requirements and examples for all bids. Each chapter ends with a quiz and answers on its contents.

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Culbertson Point-Count Bidding

CULBERTSON POINT-COUNT BIDDING

Improved and simplified 4-3-2-1
with the new rule of 3 & 4
by

ELY CULBERTSON
Author of *Contract Bridge Complete, Culbertson's Summary, Culbertson's Self-Teacher* and others
Editor, *Bridge World Magazine*

Edited by JOSEPHINE CULBERTSON
and ALBERT H. MOREHEAD

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Author's Foreword

The Story of the Point-Count

The point-count is older than auction or contract bridge. It was used first in whist by Dr. William Pole to determine, statistically, the relative trick-taking value of high cards. In both auction and contract bridge the point-count was known as a no-trump count, since it was used only for valuation at no-trump bids where it possesses a high degree of accuracy.

In the Culbertson System the 4–3–2–1 no-trump count, borrowed by Bryant McCampbell from Pitch and popularized by Milton Work, has been recommended since 1930 as an optional method to honour-trick valuation. Thousands of players have used it ever since and are still using it in conjunction with the honour-trick table for suit-bids. I wrote in the 1930 edition of *Contract Bridge Blue Book*: 'A comparison will show that the 4–3–2–1 point-count as advocated by Mr. Work, or other similar point-counts, are for all practical purposes identical with the no-trump valuation based on the Culbertson honour-trick count. The type of mind that thinks in figures will, perhaps, be happier with a point-count.'

Milton Work attempted to adapt the 4–3–2–1 count to trump bids. He gave up, announcing that the count was not suitable for suit-bids. At the time he was right and for years

I also opposed it as unsound. Recent developments have opened the door to the application of the point-count to trump bids as well. Various methods arose, most of them rigid and highly complex (unnecessarily so, as I found out later), but moving in the right direction. The most popular of them derived from the Culbertson valuation of distributional values.

Will a Point-Count Method Replace the Honour-Trick Method?

There has been, and is, no thought of abandoning the honour-trick method of valuation in favour of any point-count. The honour-trick method is basic and inherent to contract bridge. Bidding is mental play. Bidding is a *prediction* (or a bet) that a number of tricks, as contracted for in the bid, will be made in the play. The honour-trick method derives from the direct count of winning (and losing) tricks in the bidder's hand—a method used, consciously or unconsciously, by virtually all expert players, and one which always will be used by a great number of players. It may be called a *natural* count. An Ace is valued as one trick in bidding, for the inescapable reason that it will (almost inevitably) win one trick in play.

This does not mean that a different method, based on a point-count valuation, cannot produce excellent and even remarkable results. There is room in the Culbertson System for both languages—the concrete language of tricks and the abstract language of points. The point-count is another method of valuation leading to the *same* bids on the *same* hands.

I must confess that, in the past, I have underrated the value of the point-count method in trump bids. It was only when I undertook a thorough study of the point-count

problem that I realised its great possibilities both in bidding at the table and in learning. Today, I believe the point-count development is the greatest advance seen for years in bridge.

The honour-playing-trick method leaves much more room for the initiative and imagination of the individual player. For an expert this is an advantage. By the same token, it is a disadvantage even for many advanced players, since it becomes a source of errors and doubt. The point-count is far more specific and therefore *easier to learn and to bid.* The Culbertson point-count is revolutionising the learning of bridge by eliminating the weary months and years hitherto required to become a good player.

To those who thought that contract was too difficult, the point-count is a revelation. I have seen beginners, after only a few sessions of play, bid better than average performers. The count is so automatic that it virtually thinks for the players—and it is easy to learn. At the same time, the count is so accurate that it *approaches* the precision of the genuine expert. I, for example, possess a finely attuned ear for bidding-values—the result of years of experience in ranking company at the card table. In doubtful situations I consulted the point-count oracle. More often than not, it was right.

My only fear is that the very qualities of the point-count method will tend to produce a legion of point-counting robots, for whom there will exist no substitute for superior thinking and imagination.

The Babel of Point-Count Methods

Until today there has existed no standard point-count method of valuation. Instead, there are five entirely different types; and the 4–3–2–1 type, which is the most popular,

has more than twenty different 'varieties'. The number of these 'methods' is still growing, and with it grows the confusion and bewilderment of the players, who do not know who is right or which way to turn. The five basic types of point-counts and all the twenty-odd varieties of the 4–3–2–1 count seem to be agreed on one thing only: protected by the anonymity of the point-count, they preach and practise the Culbertson System in pointed disguise.

Late in 1949, my associates and I began research to develop an improved point-count for suit-bids. This book is the result of that research. We believe it fits the most exacting specifications. We had the great advantage of coming into the field after all others and thus avoiding their errors, while profiting by their sound ideas. But much more than that was needed if we were to develop a point-count for suit-bids that would not collapse from the weight of its own complexities. The 4–3–2–1 count is at its best in no-trump bidding; not much need be done to improve it there. But an opening no-trump is a relatively rare bid. It is in the point-count valuation for suit-bids and, particularly, the valuation by points of distributional values (points for length and ruffing tricks) that the greatest improvement has been made by us.

From the standpoint of simplicity, the outstanding feature of the new Culbertson point-count is the Culbertson Rule of 3 and 4 (the third and fourth card) for measuring the point-count value of an opening bid, and especially the magic Rule of Raises.

Raises of suit-bids are the core of bidding valuation. In fact the point-count movement has been blocked for years by the inability to develop a satisfactory formula for raises. As the reader will see, the Culbertson point-count method offers a definitive solution of this problem—a solution which

is so simple that raises can be made virtually at a glance; and yet it is so precise that it could be favourably compared to an expert's 'sixth sense' valuation. The rule for revaluation of your hand after partner supports your suit is a logical extension of the Culbertson 3 and 4 Rule. It also is simple and accurate.

For the first time, point-count valuation for suit-bidding has attained the accuracy of the playing-trick count, used the world over, which I offered to the public more than twenty years ago. In fact, in some respects it has even surpassed it.

On the Rapid Count of Points

In our continued quest for simplicity we turned our attention to one defect inherent in all point-counts: the sheer labour of arithmetic in adding up all those fours and threes and twos and ones after each deal.

I pity the good lady who, knowing only the finger method, finds herself with Aces and Kings galore—more points than the ten fingers on her hands. After that, she must either stop bidding or take off her shoes. We have devised a special method for the rapid count of the 4–3–2–1 points in the hand, described in Chapter V. It is to be hoped that, armed with this rapid count technique, the good lady will no longer need to shed her footgear.

The great weakness of many point-count players is their tendency to neglect the tactics of the penalty double. They are so intent on combining their hands for the best game-bid that they forget that the biggest point-maker in bridge is a penalty double. To some extent, this defect is inherent in the structure of the point-count, where a concept of precise defensive valuation (defensive honour-tricks) is absent. To remedy this defect, at least in part, we have developed a

special chapter on penalty doubles, and enunciated a special rule based on the point-count. However, I must warn the reader that the rule is quite complicated. For penalty doubles, overcalls, shut-out bids and sacrifice bids, no point-count can adequately replace the honour-playing-trick method. An attempt to place the entire structure of bidding on a point-count basis (as is the case with some writers in America) must result in a crippled, one-sided style of bidding. The thing to do (and this is being done in England) is to use both methods of valuation.

In the rest of the book, we have tried to answer questions on the 4–3–2–1 point-count that were not previously answered or not answered satisfactorily. We have devoted many pages to advanced valuation from the standpoint of expert bidding, both in rubber and duplicate bridge. We have sought to achieve a greater simplicity than heretofore, and yet a greater accuracy.

The point-count has come of age. It is very well suited to certain types of players and to certain types of bids. If a player wishes to use point-count he will find in this book a careful, reliable guide. He will also find that he is in no way departing either from the Culbertson System or the latest methods of contract bridge.

ELY CULBERTSON

Acknowledgments

To: Josephine Culbertson, the greatest teacher and twice international champion player, who contributed so much to the basic theories of the Culbertson System.

Theodore A. Lightner, whose contributions to the Culbertson System have extended from its earliest days right up to the present day. Particularly in this book his original ideas viewed from the standpoint of a famous expert, and help in the advanced analysis of the 4–3–2–1 count, have been of utmost importance.

Alphonse Moyse, Jr., my adviser and colleague for many years, who has done such an outstanding job with *Bridge World Magazine*, which he now publishes.

Albert H. Morehead, also an outstanding analyst, who also, over the course of many years, has made major contributions to the Culbertson System, and who, together with Josephine Culbertson, has edited most of my books.

Waldemar von Zedtwitz, whose original ideas, so many of which were incorporated into the Culbertson System, included the famous 'bust' two no-trump response to the opening two-bid; Richard L. Frey, Oswald Jacoby, Myron Field, George Bard, Hy Lavinthal and others too numerous to mention who also made valuable contributions.

In a real sense, all great players, here and abroad, are in part creators of the Culbertson System. This is especially true of the leading players and writers in England and the Commonwealth.

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Book I

Point-Count Valuation and the Basic Requirements for Bids

CHAPTER I

How to Understand and Use the Point-Count

The following is a quick outline of the Culbertson point-count. In the Culbertson point-count method, we use the 4–3–2–1 count for the valuation of high cards. This count has been chosen because it is relatively the most simple and by far the best known. The practical application of this count has been much improved and simplified, especially in rendering the high-card count more accurate.

The Culbertson Point-Count
(For Distributional Points)

The High-Card Point-Count table applies to both no-trump and suit-bids. At opening no-trump bids, only the high-card point-count table is used. At all suit-bids, in addition to the 4–3–2–1 count, a new method—the Culbertson point-count—is used for valuation of low cards in long and short suits. The distributional points, when added to the point-count value of the high cards, give the exact point-count of a hand at any suit-bid by the partnership.

This is a point-count based on variations in suit lengths —a rule which is not only remarkably simple but, in precision, rivals the playing-trick valuation used by experts.

Table Outline of Culbertson Point-Count Valuation

POINT-COUNT FOR NO-TRUMP BIDS

Ace = 4
King = 3
Queen = 2
Knave = 1

Count only high-card points for opening no-trump bids.

CORRECTION POINTS

	Add	*Deduct*
4 Aces	1	
Any singleton honour except the Ace..		1

WHEN RAISING NO-TRUMP BIDS

Use above table and: Add 1 point for five-card suit headed by K or Q–10 or better. DO NOT subtract for King, Queen or Knave single.

OPENING SUIT-BIDS OF ONE
(The Opening Hand)

I

Ace = 4
King = 3
Queen = 2
Knave = 1

Add 1 *point* for all four Aces.
Deduct 1 *point* for a singleton honour, except the Ace.
Deduct 1 *point* if the hand contains no Ace.

II

THE RULE OF 3 and 4
(Point-count of Length Values)

To your high-card point-count total, ADD
1 *point for each card over* FOUR *in the trump suit,* PLUS
1 *point for each card over* THREE *in all side-suits.*

See also Finer Points, Chapter IV

Raises of Opening Suit-Bids of One
(The Responding Hand)

Count your high cards exactly as for opening suit-bids.

To your high-card point-count total, *add the difference in length between your own trump length and your shortest side-suit.*

Example: With 4 trumps and a singleton you have 4—1=3 distributional points in the hand.

Deduct 1 point, lacking a four-card, or longer, side-suit.

No other deductions are needed for this remarkable rule.

Declarer's Revaluation
(After Partner has Raised)

To your high-card point-count total previously counted, add 2 points for each card over *four* in the trump suit, plus 1 point for each card over *three* in all side-suits.

These simple rules open up the entire field of bidding revaluation. Their accuracy is such that it saves two-thirds of the learning-time for beginners and enables any player to leap into a more advanced game.

It remains now to learn how to translate the total points in a player's hand into bids and raises for the combined hands. This is accomplished by another simple table of game and slam expectancies, expressed in points.

CULBERTSON RULE OF 22 Points
FOR OPENING TWO-BIDS IN A SUIT

Count your points exactly as for other opening suit-bids of one—except for the count of your trump length. Thus:

1. *High-card points* (4–3–2–1)—see table of opening suit-bids.
2. Trump length: 2 *points* for each trump *over* 5.
3. Side-suit length: 1 point for each card over 3.

See also opening bids of 2 and 3 no-trumps.

If the total count of your hand is 22 points or more you have a TWO-BID

Exception: With 4–4–4–1 hand pattern you need about 26 points.

SUMMARY FOR OPENING ONE NO-TRUMP BIDS

The requirements for an opening bid of one no-trump, in any position, and whether or not vulnerable, are:

16–18 points in high cards (never more nor less) counting Ace 4, King 3, Queen 2, Knave 1.
Balanced distribution, preferably 4–3–3–3.

SUMMARY FOR OPENING SUIT-BIDS OF ONE

An opening suit-bid of one requires a biddable suit and a combined high-card and distributional point-count minimum as follows:
12 to 14 points depending on the strength of the trump suit.

What It Takes to Make Game

Partnership bidding is based on the *Game and Slam Expectancies* described in the following pages. Briefly, the expectancies are:

20 to 24 points in the combined hands will usually produce a part-score but seldom a game.

26 points in the combined hands will usually produce a good play for game at no-trumps or in a major suit. 25 points will often produce a no-trump game and, more often, a game in a strong major suit.

29 points will usually produce a game in a minor suit.

33 points will usually produce a favourable play for a small slam. Explore by means of Asking Bids or other slam conventions.

37 points will usually produce a favourable play for a grand slam. Explore by means of Asking Bids or other slam conventions. It is important to remember that, with unbalanced distributions and freaks, even the range from 29 to 32 points will often produce slams and should be carefully explored (see Asking Bids).

This is the end of the quick summary.

The slam, game and no-game expectancies are explained fully on the following pages.

Game and Slam Expectancies

You can measure the strength and weakness of your own and your partner's hands by adding the high-card points shown by partner's bids to your own points. To do this, there are a few basic figures that you should understand and remember.

The Basic Number 40

Each of the four suits is worth 10 points in high cards. A pack of 52 cards contains 40 points.

This basic number 40 serves as a fairly reliable guide for determining the game or slam capacity of partnership hands. For instance, if partnership bidding discloses a count of 34 high-card points at no-trumps, the opposition, as a rule, cannot hold more than 6 points. With only an Ace and a Queen outstanding, the partnership usually has a good chance to fulfil a small slam contract.

The total count of 40 is a reliable guide only at opening no-trump bids.

At opening no-trump bids *only* the 4–3–2–1 count is used. Consequently, the total of 40 remains constant. In all other bidding situations (and that includes *responding* with no-trump bids) extra points for suit lengths and ruffers are added to the 4–3–2–1 count. The total of the pack will, therefore, be in excess of 40 and will vary considerably with each deal.

Theoretically, at trump bids a pack may contain as many as 80 points! You may then commit the disastrous error of bidding a 'sure' grand slam with a count of 38 points, only to discover that opponents show up with a couple of Aces.

It is true that, in practice, the variations of the point-count at suit-bids begins when the combined point-count of a partnership exceeds 35 points. The fact remains that even when the point-count indicates that you are in the slam zone, it will still be necessary to determine (by other methods) at least the first-round controls, i.e., the possession of Aces or voids in the combined hands (see Slam Bidding).

The Average Hand in High-Card Points

The 40 points of the pack divided into four hands give you 10 points as an average for each hand. (In honour-trick value, 10 points of the average hand equal 2 + honour-tricks).

Here is the perfect average hand:

♠ A 9 7 5	(4)
♥ K 8 6	(3)
♦ Q 3 2	(2)
♣ J 10 4	(1)
	10 Points

Like all perfect things, this perfect average is rare. Other 10-point hands and other hand-patterns occur much more often. The important thing is that the concept of 10 points for the average hand serves as a starting line from which the point requirements for no-game, game and the little and big slams can be accurately determined and easily remembered. This is how you can reason it out:

The average of two combined hands is 20 points, half of the pack's high cards. This means that the partners should make seven tricks (one-odd) or go down one. Inasmuch as the declarer has at least a one-trick advantage when playing at the best suit-bid, the combined hands containing 20 high-card points will average to make one-odd.*

* Some writers superficially conclude that 3 points equal one trick (40 divided by 13). They err in failing to realise that, after most of the high-card tricks are exhausted, each of the remaining points is, in effect, equal to a full trick.

The Point-Count Valuation of Combined Hands

In each deal a player obtains the total point-count value of his hand by adding up his high-card and distributional points. From information conveyed through partner's bids (or passes), a player obtains the point-count value of partner's hand. By adding the point-count values of the combined hands, both partners will know fairly accurately when to stop short of game, and when to try for a slam. This knowledge is greatly facilitated by the following table of probable expectancies for no-game, game and slam bids in the two combined hands. It is scientifically exact and it will save many hours of drudgery in remembering the point-count requirements for various bids.

In the following table, the number of expected tricks is given for suit-bids. For no-trump bids, subtract one trick from the number of expected tricks given. For instance, 24 points = 9 tricks at a suit-bid; at no-trumps, 24 points = 9 — 1 or 8 tricks.

Point-Count Table of Expectancies
(In Combined Hands)

High and Low Card Points	*Expected Tricks*	*Comment*
20	7	*Part-score zone.* The best hope with hands of this type is manœuvring for penalties.
22	8	*Same.*
24	9	*Still the part-score zone.* However, a game in major suits is not rare with

High and Low Card Points	*Expected Tricks*	*Comments*
		a good fit in the trump suit and unbalanced hand-patterns. Good players keep a sharp look-out for game.
25	9–10	*Border-line game zone.* In rubber bridge, bid game in spades, hearts, or no-trumps if the hand contains a good long suit, or a fit, with unbalanced distributions.
26	10	*Game.* Should be bid in spades, hearts or no-trumps. 26 is a basic number, serving as a definite line of demarcation between game and no-game expectancies. Most of the point-count requirements for bids are built round this number 26; and from this number starts the climb toward slam bids. The combined hands will make game at your best bid in the great majority of cases. However, failure to make game is not rare.
27–28	10–11	*Assured Game*—at a best bid in major suits or no-trumps. As a rule, make a forcing bid, or jump to game in the best available suit or in no-trumps. The exceptions to game-expectancy arise from sterile distribution (4–3–3–3 in both hands) or misfits.

High and Low Card Points	*Expected Tricks*	*Comments*
29	11	*Good chance for game*—at best bid in diamonds or clubs. However, prefer a no-trump bid to minor-suit bids for game.
30–31	11	*Assured game*—at best bid in diamonds or clubs. Prefer a diamond or club bid to no-trumps, except in duplicate bridge.
32	11–12	*Border-line small slam zone.* Opponents will hold at least 8 points, an equivalent of two Aces or an Ace, a King and a Knave. Small slam should be investigated to insure first-round controls, i.e., Aces and voids, in partnership hands. If controls are available, a slam should be bid, provided the trump suit is strong and a good side length is available. A small slam also should be bid on freak hands with a strong trump suit. Avoid slams or slam tries in no-trumps.
33	12	*Small slam zone.* A small slam will be made about two-thirds of the time. A slam should be bid at the best trump bid in a major or minor suit. To avoid the duplication of high-card points with distributional

High and Low Card Points	*Expected Tricks*	*Comments*
		points it is preferable to investigate the first-round controls. With rare exceptions, a small slam bid at no-trumps should be avoided in rubber bridge.
34–35	12–13	*A small slam is virtually assured.* It will be made at least four out of five times at the best trump bid. In duplicate bridge prefer no-trump to trump bids with 35 points.
36	13	*A border-line grand slam.* Investigate first- and second-round controls.
37	13	*Grand slam zone.* A grand slam should be bid if the partnership controls the first round in every suit and if the trump suit and side-suits can count up to 13 winners.
38	13	*A grand slam is almost assured in no-trumps*, where usually only high cards are counted. Outstanding, there could only be a Queen or two Knaves. One rare exception to the grand slam expectancy is when both partnership hands are distributed 4–3–3–3; or when there is duplication of high-card values, as when one partner holds a doubleton A–K and the other partner a doubleton Q–J.

Comments

Whether at no-trumps or in suit calls, it pays, before bidding grand slams, to investigate the first-round controls—see Chapter XV.

To summarize: There are four basic expectancies that must be remembered for the partnership hands. They are the figures 20, 26, 33 and 37. From 20 to 24, we are in the part-score zone. 25 points belong both to the game and part-score zone. From 26 to 29, we are in a game zone in major suits and no-trumps. From 29 to 31, we are in a 'five-odd' zone, game in diamonds or clubs. 32 points belong both to the small slam and five-odd zones. With 33 to 36 points we are in the small slam zone. Finally, with 37 points we climb to the top of the bids—the grand slam.

CHAPTER II

Point-Count Valuation of No-trump Bids

Point-Count Requirements for Opening One No-trump Bids

An opening no-trump bid of one is a strong bid. Whereas an opening suit-bid of one is made on as little as 13 points, or a King above the average hand, the opening no-trump bid of one contains from two Kings to two Aces above the average (60% to 80%).

In any position, vulnerable or not vulnerable, open with one no-trump if you hold:

1. 16–18 points in high cards.
2. A balanced distribution; that is,
   - 4–3–3–3 (the basic no-trump distribution).
   - 4–4–3–2 (with this hand pattern, if you have two biddable major suits, it is optional to open in a suit or no-trumps).
   - 5–3–3–2 (with a five-card minor suit headed by a high card).
   - 6–3–2–2 (exceptionally, and only with a strong six-card minor suit).
3. Stoppers in at least three suits; if there is a doubleton in the hand it should be at least as good as Q–x.

VALUATION OF NO-TRUMP BIDS

Point-count valuation of no-trump bids is quite simple. As a rule, only the count of high cards (4–3–2–1) is used when computing the value of your hand as *declarer* at no-trumps.

For instance,

♠ Q J 7	3
♥ K 9	3
♦ A Q 8 7 5	6
♣ K Q 3	5
	17

For opening no-trump bids, do not count five-card or longer suits. However, an 18-point hand with a strong five-card suit such as A–K–Q–x–x is usually too strong for one no-trump and is better opened with one in the suit.

In revaluation of the opening no-trump hand: An extra point credit should be taken if opener's hand contains a five-card suit and partner raises in no-trumps. The assumption is, if partner raises in no-trumps he must have a balanced hand, probably 4–3–3–3, and therefore the suit is quickly establishable. If, on the hand above, one no-trump is bid and partner raises to two no-trumps, the opener adds 1 point for his diamond length, bringing his count up to 18.

For no-trump take-outs: If one no-trump is bid by the responding hand (responding to partner's opening suit-bid of one), the normal response is based on 6 points. This requirement may, however, be shaded to 5 points, if your hand contains a ten combined with a higher honour, or in a suit such as 10–9–x–x, as in the following hand:

♠ Q 10 4 (2) ♥ 8 7 ♦ K 10 8 4 3 (3) ♣ 7 5 2

For raises of partner's opening no-trump bid: The raising hand adds 1 point for a five-card suit headed by King, or Q–10, or better.

♠ Q 7 6
♥ 5 2
♦ K Q 6 4 2
♣ 5 4 3

Count 8 points, including 1 for the diamond length.

The 4–3–2–1 count is quite accurate for straight no-trump play: that is, the valuation 4–3–2–1 corresponds closely to the actual value of the honours; the Queens and Knaves, no longer inhibited by the formidable trump barrier, develop freely. Consequently, no other point corrections are necessary. The requirements and technique of no-trump bidding are fully treated in Chapters VII and VIII. Here, I will give only a summary of expectancies and requirements which are necessary to understand or to use point-count valuation in no-trump bidding.

Expectancies in Combined Hands

26 points give partnership a profitable play for game.

33 points give partnership a profitable play for a small slam.

37 points give partnership a profitable play for a grand slam.

Minimum opening one no-trump bid (16 points):

	♠ A 7 2	♥ A Q 4	♦ J 5 3 2	♣ K Q 6
Points:	4 +	4 + 2 +	1 +	3 + 2

Maximum opening one no-trump bid (18 points):

	♠ A 4 3 2	♥ A K 6	♦ Q J 5	♣ A 4 3
Points:	4 +	4 + 3 +	2 + 1 +	4

Responses to One No-trump Openings

Raises (on balanced distribution):

7 points or fewer—pass

8 or 9 points—raise to two no-trumps

10 to 14 points—raise to three no-trumps

15 points or more—make a slam try (see Chapter 15)

Suit Take-outs (on unbalanced distribution or long suits):

7 points or fewer—usually pass (decisions often are close)
8 to 12 points—bid two in a suit
More than 12 points—usually make a forcing (jump) take-out

The rigid requirements in high cards and hand-patterns (hand distributions) are typical of no-trump bidding. An opening no-trump is a *limit* bid containing 16–18 points, no more and no less. A limit bid is one that has a floor and a ceiling, i.e., a minimum-maximum requirement (in points or honour-tricks). As a result, the responding hand can judge exactly the minimum-maximum limits of combined hands and adjust its responses accordingly. For instance, if your partner bids one no-trump and you hold 8 points, you will reason that if he has a minimum, then your combined hands will not produce game, since his 16 points plus your own 8 points equal 24 points, 2 points short of game expectancy. On the other hand, if your partner has 17 or 18 points, then there may well be a game. Accordingly, you raise your partner's opening no-trump bid to two no-trumps (provided your hand does not contain

a five-card or longer major suit and unbalanced distribution).

Again, if your hand counts up to 10 points, say 9 points in high cards and 1 point for a five-card length, you know that with 26 points you are in the game zone even if your partner's opening no-trump bid is a minimum of 16 points; and should your hand count up to 15 points, preferably all in high cards, you start looking for a slam, since your 15 points plus his possible maximum of 18 points will give you the 33 points which characterise the expectancy of a small slam.

Different Ways to Value the Same Hand

The same hand may be valued in several different ways. There is declarer's valuation, when you are bidding your own suit, or making the first no-trump bid for your side. There is a different valuation for raising your partner's bid. There is revaluation of your hand when you have bid a suit and partner has raised it.

For instance, you hold:

♠ A Q ♥ Q 10 9 2 ♦ A Q 9 8 5 ♣ Q 10

The high-card points of this hand remain unchanged throughout the bidding. But the number of distributional points will change according to the proposed bid. You have:

For an opening no-trump bid.....	16 High-Card Points.
For an opening one-diamond bid, or for a two-diamond take-out of partner's one-spade bid.....	18 (16 H-C + 1 Low-Card Point in trumps + 1 L-C in hearts.)

In support of partner's one-heart bid	18 (16 H-C Plus 2 Raise Points).
In revaluation of the hand for a diamond contract, if partner raises diamonds.....	19 (16 H-C + 3 L-C).
For a no-trump rebid, if partner raises no-trumps	17 (16 H-C + 1 for the five-card length).

The revaluation of the trump suit arises from the fact that the opener, whose first bid is made in the dark, cannot *assume* a favourable distribution for his trump suit; but when his suit is raised, he *knows* the distribution of his trump suit will be more favourable and therefore revalues his trump suit upward.

Last, and most important, there is a sixth kind of valuation: valuation of high cards *against* opponents' trump bids. This valuation is based on the count of *defensive winners* in partnership *and* opponents' hands. In this manner, the partners are able to gauge the *limits* of opponents' bids. They can then penalize the opponents (when they are out on a limb), or perhaps make a profitable sacrifice bid (when a game or a slam by the opponents appears probable).

Here as in all defensive bids a point-count, however perfect, is of little value. The Culbertson Rule of 8, which is based on defensive honour-tricks is far more exact. The reason is that in a point-count there is no way to distinguish between the high-card points for Aces and Kings (which win in defence) and the points for Queens and Knaves (which are often trumped). This is also the reason why the traditional Culbertson requirement of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 honour-tricks for opening suit-bids still holds good under any point-count method.

In conclusion, a bridge player is like a quick-change actor who, though appearing in the same play, must perform in six different rôles.

We now come to the most important and exciting part of bidding valuation by a point-count method: The Culbertson point-count valuation of suit bids.

CHAPTER III

Culbertson Point-Count Valuation For Suit Bids

To obtain the exact point-count of any hand *for initial valuation for an opening suit bid of one*, or the valuation of responder's hand in bidding another suit:

I Count the high-card points on the basis of the improved 4–3–2–1 count for trump bids. See the Table below.

II Count the low-card (distributional) points on the basis of the Culbertson Rule of Three and Four. See the Rule below.

III The combined count of high-card and low-card (distributional) points will give the total value of the hand.

I The 4-3-2-1 Count for Suit Bids

(For High Cards Only)

Ace	= 4 points
King	= 3 points
Queen	= 2 points
Knave	= 1 point

Add 1 point for all four Aces in the hand. Deduct 1 point if the hand contains no Ace.

Deduct 1 point for each singleton honour except the Ace.

VALUATION FOR SUIT BIDS

(For Opening Suit Bids)

Count long suits as follows:

Each trump over FOUR = 1 *point.*
Each card over THREE *in each side suit* = 1 *point.*

1. OPENER'S HAND Spades Trumps		2. OPENER'S HAND Spades Trumps	
♠ A K 7 5 4	8 (7 Plus 1)	♠ A K 10 9 5 4 2	10 (7 + 3)
♥ Q J 3	3	♥ A 9 3 2	5 (4 + 1)
♦ K 7 5 4	4 (3 plus 1)	♦ J	0 (singleton)
♣ 3	0	♣ 8	0
	15		15 points

An Alternative Method

There is an alternative method for counting your length values for opening suit-bids. Instead of counting your long suits count 1 point for each doubleton, 2 points for each singleton and 3 points for a void in a suit. The results will be identical—it is like measuring with the short end of the stick instead of the long end. However—and this is important—this method cannot be simple and accurate (on mathematical grounds) when applied to the raising hand or in revaluation (after a raise). To be accurate it will have to contain so many correction points to be added or subtracted that its practical value would be greatly reduced.

Basic Point Requirements for Opening Suit-Bids of One

14 points or better. Automatic and obligatory opening suit-bid of one, in any position, and in all circumstances—

except for hands that are better opened with opening no-trump bids of one or higher, and the forcing bid.

13 points. Open as a rule. The only exception is a bare 13-point hand (usually distributed 4–3–3–3) or no escape if partner pushes the opener to the level of two.

12 points. A good five-card suit (A–Q or three of the five honours; or a six-card or longer suit). The hand must contain two defensive tricks (combinations of honour-tricks such as A–K, A–Q, A, K–Q or K–x).

11 points. A good five-card suit headed by A Q or A K, with an Ace or King outside, as in the 11-point example below.

EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATING THE THREE AND FOUR COUNT FOR DECLARER'S HAND, IN OPENING SUIT-BIDS OF ONE

♠ A K 8 4 2	8 (7 + 1)	♠ 5 3	0
♥ 7 3	0	♥ 10 7 6 2	1
♦ J 10	1	♦ A Q 5	6
♣ K 8 4 3	4 (3 + 1)	♣ A K 6 4	7
Bid one spade	13	*Bid one club*	14
♠ A Q 10 9 6	7 (6 + 1)	♠ A K J 7 3	9 (8 + 1)
♥ A 8 6	4	♥ 10 7 5	0
♦ 7 2	0	♦ K 3 2	3
♣ 5 4 3	0	♣ 8 7	0
Bid one spade	11	*Bid one spade*	12

Note that an 11-point hand is rarely bid—only when the hand has a good five-card suit (headed by A Q or A K), 2½ defensive tricks, and some intermediate strength (tens, nines, etc.).

For detailed and advanced treatment of opening suit-bids of one, see Chapter 9.

The Magic Rule for the Raising Hand

This is one of the simplest and yet one of the most scientific rules in contract bridge.

To your high-card point-count total, add the difference in length between your trump length and your shortest side-suit. Deduct 1 *point lacking a four-card or longer side-suit.*

PARTNER OPENS WITH ONE SPADE

♠ Q 7 6	2
♥ K 5 4 3 2	3
♦ 6 5	1 Raise point
♣ K 7 5	3
	–
	9

The 1 raise point is the difference in length between trump length and shortest side-suit.

♠ K J 10 8 4	4
♥ A 9 8 3 2	4
♦ 6 3 2	0
♣	5 Raise points
	–
	13 points

Your shortest side-suit is a void which equals zero. Therefore you have 5 raise points.

♠ 10 5 4 3 2	0
♥ K 9 5	3
♦ 8 7 6	0
♣ 5 2	3 Raise points
	–
	6 Points minus 1 equals 5 points

The deduction of 1 point is because of the lack of a four-card, or longer, side-suit. A raise in your partner's suit can be given with 5 points, without an intervening bid, when you have more than four trumps.

Note that you do not have to deduct 1 *point for adequate three-card support or for* 4–3–3–3 *suit pattern. You also do not have to incorporate trump promotion in your raise count. Only the Culbertson Raise formula is so simple without the loss of accuracy.*

Basic Point Requirements for Responses

Raises:

A single raise, 6–10 points. Double raise, 13–16 points. Triple raise (pre-emptive) 12–14 points, with five or six trumps, but not including more than 8 points in high cards.

There is a group of hands ranging from 11 to 12 points which are too strong for a single raise and yet too uncertain for a double raise. With such hands try to make a *temporising* bid (in some other suit) until you hear partner's second bid.

The Three and Four Count for Suit Take-outs:

When partner has opened with a suit-bid of one, for purposes of responding with a bid in your own suit, you value your hand exactly as the opener does:

Count your high-card points and:

A. Count 1 point for every card over *four* in the suit you bid.

B. Count 1 point for every card over *three* in each other suit, including the suit of partner's opening bid.

Suit Take-outs (requirements in points):

At the one-level, 5 points minimum. At the two-level (non-jump) 10 points. With hands of intermediate strength counting 11 or 12 points, try to bid twice, though you are not strong enough to force partner to game. All suit take-outs are valued as declarer's hand, i.e., 1 point for each card after four, in the trump suit and after three in side-suits.

For example: Partner bids one spade. You value the following hand for a take-out of two hearts:

♠ Q J	3
♥ Q 10 8 7 6 3	4 (2 + 2)
♦ A 9 6 2	5 (4 + 1)
♣ 5	0
	12

Note that the doubleton Q–J in spades is given full value because partner bid the suit; in hearts, 1 point is counted for each card over *four*, because responder is valuing his hand as declarer with hearts as trumps. The 12-point total fully justifies a two-heart response to partner's one spade.

No-trump Take-outs:

A no-trump take-out of partner's opening suit-bid is valued in the same way as an opening no-trump bid: *Only high cards are counted.*

One no-trump, 6–10 points. Two no-trumps, 13–15 points. Three no-trumps, 16–18 points.

Declarer's Trump Revaluation
(After the raise of your suit by partner)

Declarer in his original valuation of the trump suit assumes *unfavourable* distribution of the suit. Consequently, a five-card trump suit is valued at 1 distributional point and a six-card trump suit at 2 distributional points. However, when the responding hand raises the trump suit, the declarer's own trump suit is greatly enhanced in distributional value. Hence the importance of revaluation of declarer's trump suit after a raise.

After the opener's trump suit has been raised, he must revalue his hand as follows:

Add 2 *points for each card over four in the trump suit*, plus 1 point for each card over three in every side-suit.

He simply totals his high cards, *adds* 2 *points for each trump over four*; plus 1 point for each card over three in every side suit. The trump revaluation is a logical extension of the Culbertson Rule of 3 and 4.

For example, you opened with one spade and partner raised to two spades. Your hand is:

♠ A Q 10 6 *5 3*	10 (6 + 4)
♥ Q 10 9 *2*	3 (2 plus 1)
♦ A 5	4
♣ 3	
	17

Initially you counted 1 point for each card over four in spades. Now that partner supported your spade bid, the increased worth of your spade is expressed by *now valuing each card therein over four at* 2 *points each*. Thus you gain

2 points over your initial opening-bid valuation of 15 points. Your revaluation count of 17 points makes game possible, if your partner has 9 or 10 points for his raise. This suggests the re-bid of three spades, which your partner will raise to four spades, if he has a maximum or near maximum raise. If your partner passes your three spade bid, because of a minimum raise, you still have better than an even chance of fulfilling your contract.

CHAPTER IV

The Finer Points of Hand Valuation

I have been asked: By what steps did we arrive at the formula of 3 and 4?

First, we built the most accurate possible point-count regardless of complications. Then we reduced it to a mathematical formula (and happily found that it worked even more accurately). The 4–3–2–1 count plus the 3 and 4 formula will accurately value more than 95 per cent of all bridge hands. *No other point-count method can do nearly so well.*

It would be nice if this simple process would give a good valuation of every hand without exception. Unfortunately, there are some values that are by no means constant. To value them in all hands would lead to over-bidding, or to under-bidding, which is often a worse crime. Hence the necessity for correction points to approach the ideal of 100 per cent accuracy for expert bidding. Some of these correction points are already familiar to the reader. Below I am giving additional correction points. They are not necessary for beginners but are necessary in advanced valuation and especially in expert bidding where a decision on a fine point of valuation may spell the difference between a victory or a defeat. The principal ones are as follows:

Correction Points to Be Deducted

1. Unsupported Queens and Knaves. For no-trump bids, all honours are counted at their full value. For opening trump bids, however, such a holding as Q–x–x, or J–x–x, or Q–x, or J–x—that is, a Queen or Knave that is *not in combination with another honour*—is somewhat over-valued. Therefore, *deduct* 1 *point* if your hand contains one or more Queens or Knaves not in combination with another honour. This correction, though not used in other point-count methods, is among the important ones. It helps eliminate disastrously weak opening bids. For instance:

♠ A K J 7 3 ♥ Q 7 2 ♦ 10 7 4 3 ♣ 6

Spades trumps. The hand counts 12 points (10+2), but 1 point is deducted for the "uncombined" Queen, bringing the count down to 11. Pass.

Do not deduct more than 1 point for uncombined honours, even if you have two or more of them:

♠ A K 8 6 3 ♥ Q 7 2 ♦ J 7 4 3 ♣ 6

Spades trumps. This hand still counts 11 points (10+2, minus 1). Though you have two uncombined honours, you deduct only 1 point.

Do not deduct for a Queen or Knave that is combined with another honour, as in A Q x, A J x, J 10 x. Do not deduct for a Queen or Knave heading a five-card suit, as Q–x–x–x–x.

Do not deduct for a Queen or Knave in a suit your partner has bid. And, to repeat, do not make this deduction in *no-trump* valuation.

You do not need to make the deduction of 1 *point for unsupported Queens and Knaves if your hand contains* 2½ *honour-tricks. This is not quite so accurate as the straight deduction of* 1 *point but the difference is very slight.*

2. Where you have a weak hand (6 to 7 points) in support of partner's suit-bid *in a* 4–4–3–2 *suit pattern*, it is prudent to deduct one point from your raise point-count. Of course, if your partner's bidding indicates that his trump suit is rebiddable, there is no necessity for this precaution.

Correction Points to Be Added

1. Solid and Near-Solid Suits

(*a*) Add 1 point for each suit (trump or plain) in which you have 100 honours.

(*b*) Add 2 points for each suit (trump or plain) in which you have 150 honours.

The reason for this important correction point does not lie so much in the fact that you get an extra bonus for four or five honours, as in the fact that hands with solid or nearly solid (one loser only) suits are distributionally considerably stronger.

In re-bid situations even a combination like A J 10 or K J 10, although without the fourth honour, is worth an extra point.

(*c*) Add 1 point when holding trump support for partner's suit-bid and a five-card or longer side-suit headed by A K, A Q or K Q.

2. The Problem of Tens. One or more tens, when in combination with a higher honour, is definitely a 'plus' value. In re-bid situations a ten may attain the value of a full point when in combinations like K Q 10 x or K J 10 x. The general principle about the tens is as follows:

For Re-bid Situations (*Trump or No-trump*): In any suit (trump or plain), add 1 point for two tens if each is accompanied by one higher honour; or for one ten if it is preceded by two higher honours. For example, K 10 x x *and* Q 10 x x in another suit are worth 1 point more in a re-bid situation; A J 10 x x *or* K Q 10 x is worth 1 point more.

NOTE: In all cases where Knaves or tens are given an extra value, they are not to be counted for slam bidding; also when a ten is valued as part of a solid or near-solid suit, it cannot be valued as in combination with higher honours.

In re-bid situations, *in the trump suit*, count the ten as one point, when it is in combination with one or more high cards. This applies even if your partner did not support your suit.

In general, the principle that the *positional* value of honour cards is modified according to bidding, which we apply to honour-trick valuation, also applies to point-count valuation. For instance, ♣ K x—usually worth 3 points—may drop to 2 points or even 1 point if the bidding discloses a strong club suit on the left.

3. Honours in combination are worth more than isolated honours. A–K–x and A–x–x + K–x–x of a different suit count the same; but A–K–x will often win an extra trick. This is a defect inherent in the 4–3–2–1 count. (In the honour-trick valuation A–K–x is worth 2 tricks and A–x + K–x only 1½ tricks.) This defect is partly taken care of when a point is deducted for unsupported Queens and Knaves, but hands in which Kings are not in combination with other honours must be regarded as somewhat weakened. Conversely, hands with honours in combination are valued somewhat more highly than their actual count.

♠ A K 6 4 ♥ A Q 7 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ 6 5 2

This hand has 13 points but no good re-bid; hence it would be a pass, first or second hand. However, the expert would consider the following issues: All the honours are in combination. The hand contains two Aces. These advantages bring the hand closer to 14 points than to 13. Consequently he would open.

It is only occasionally that revaluation of this type will turn a pass to a bid, or a one-bid to a two-bid. In all but a few rare cases, the player following our method closely will come out with expert bids and passes.

CHAPTER V

How to Count Points Rapidly

Heretofore one of the great drawbacks to point-count bidding has been the amount of time players have had to spend in the mere process of counting up their points.

The following method for the rapid count of hands should enable a player, after a moderate amount of practice, to give the high-card count of many hands containing six or more honours by simply glancing at them.

The basic principle is as follows: the player learns to recognize certain combinations of three or four cards as representing a certain number. Whenever he sees these combinations, he recognizes them and knows the count. Then he merely adds the remaining count in the hand to the known count of the combination. Or it may be possible with a big hand to obtain two complete combinations and simply add them together.

This reduces mathematical computations to one or at most two, against the five additions required to count six high cards, six for seven cards, etc. The method will be presented in three lessons. The reader should gain facility in applying what he learns in one lesson before moving on to the next one.

Lesson 1: The Basic Method

Consider the holding A K Q J in a suit. This apparently ordinary holding actually has rather unusual qualities. Firstly, it represents exactly an average holding, or one-quarter of the pack. Secondly, it counts exactly 10, an easy number to work with. This fact may easily be established by counting $4 + 3 = 7 + 2 = 9 + 1 = 10$, or by dividing the total of 40 points in the pack by 4. A player noting this combination should have no difficulty—he simply says 10 to himself whenever he encounters it. In any hand having this combination, three mathematical steps have already been saved.

With only this start, note the following hand:

♠ A 7 ♥ A K Q J 5 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ 8 4 3

This hand can instantly be appraised at 14 high-card points —10 + 4.

The Ace, King, Queen, Knave do not, of course, have to be in the same suit.

♠ A 7 ♥ K Q J 5 4 ♦ A 6 2 ♣ 8 4 3

One Ace is simply placed mentally with the K Q J and the high-card total recognized as 10. 10 + 4 = 14.

For that matter, the A K Q J may be in different suits, but can easily be picked out.

♠ A 7 5 ♥ J 4 2 ♦ Q 6 5 3 ♣ K 7 6

The *A K Q J* can be instantly noted, and the result, 10, recognised.

Take slightly more complicated examples:

♠ A Q 7 ♥ K Q 6 5 3 ♦ K J 4 ♣ 8 2

Take out the A, K, Q, and J (A Q 7, K J 4) known to be 10, from the two suits, and a K and a Q remain, easily seen to be 5. The sum, 15, can quickly be reached.

♠ A 6 ♥ A K Q 7 2 ♦ Q J 5 ♣ K J 4

To get the count of this hand by adding each honour is quite a job, but by using our method, the answer, 20, can be reached almost instantaneously. The hand is composed of two sets of A K Q J's! Add the Queen of spades to the hand, and it can be counted almost as quickly, as the Queen is simply added to the two sets of A K Q J's, or 20, giving 22. Omit the Knave of diamonds and the count is easily seen to be 19, or one point fewer than the two sets of A K Q J's, etc.

To visualize A K Q J as 10 is easy. Scarcely more difficult is to note that if the Knave is missing, that is just 1 point fewer. Consequently it should be easy to note and remember that A, K, Q is 9. This gives a quick count on hands where the Knave is missing. Thus,

♠ A K Q 7 ♥ A K Q 5 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 8 6

can be seen at a glance to be 18. Remove either Queen and the result is 9 + 7 = 16—one operation. Add the King of clubs to the original holding, and we have 18 + 3 = 21, etc.

♠ A Q 7 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ Q 6 5

can easily be seen to be A K Q + A K Q, or 18, etc.

This combination will permit the rapid counting of many additional hands.

In this lesson the reader should also memorize the following two-card combinations:

A K = 7
A Q = 6
K Q = 5

When practising this lesson, the player should avoid adding 4 and 3 to obtain 7. He should look at the combination A K, and use the combination count. If, by chance, he cannot remember what the combination count is, it is simple to obtain it, and this will shortly fix the count in his mind. A sure way to memorize anything eventually is to attempt to remember it and, if unsuccessful, to refresh one's memory by reconstruction.

This may seem unimportant, as it is so easy to add 4 and 3, etc. But remember, *knowing* the total instead of having to obtain it saves one full mathematical step in counting hands.

Obviously the A K or K Q, etc., do not have to be in the same suit to be regarded as units of 7 or 5. A x x and K x x should be regarded as 7 points without counting.

Let us now return to Hand 4:

♠ A Q 7 ♥ K Q 6 5 3 ♦ K J 4 ♣ 8 2

After taking out the A K Q J, a unit of 10, the K + Q unit is left, known to be 5 without even adding 3 and 2. The hand is quickly seen to be 10 + 5, only one easy mathematical step being necessary.

An easy method is now apparent for counting certain combinations. ♠ A K x x, ♥ A K x can quickly be seen to be twice 7, or 14; ♠ A Q x, ♥ A Q x, is twice 6, or 12. ♠ A K x, ♥ A K x,

♦ A K x (if you are lucky enough to hold it) is 3 times 7, or 21. Likewise, three A Q's are 3 times 6, or 18.

Before going on to the next lesson, the reader should gain facility, by practice, with the method given above. Hands in this or another book can be used, or hands actually dealt. If the method does not apply easily to a hand, disregard the hand or, if playing, add it by the piece-meal method.

Lesson 2: Supplementary Method

The method described in the first lesson will provide for rapid counting of a great many hands. However, it does not work in hands where the honours are all (or sometimes almost all) of two denominations. A few such hands were shown at the end of Lesson 1.

Four of a Kind

Obviously the count of fours (or threes) of a kind can be most easily obtained by multiplying rather than adding, and this is commonly done. However, if a player learns to recognize four Aces as 16, four Kings as 12, and four Queens as 8, he will save the step of multiplying. Of course, if the number does not occur to him, he can easily obtain it, and next time will doubtless remember it.

♠ A 7 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ K 7 5 4

The result here can be obtained quite easily—3 x 4 = 12 + 3 = 15. However, it is still easier to think of the result as 1 point fewer than four Aces (16). Thus, the count of 15 is arrived at instantaneously. This operation does not save a step over the first method; it is easier only because adding or subtracting 1 point is an effortless operation.

Also, three Kings and an Ace is 1 more than four Kings (12) or 13; three Kings and a Queen is 1 fewer than four Kings, or 11, etc.

Hands containing three or four of a kind and one other card are easy to count either by the method above or by adding the lone card to the count of the three or four. Thus,

♠ A K 7 ♥ A 5 3 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♣ A 4 2

can be quickly seen to be 16 + 3 = 19.

♠ K Q 5 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ K 7 6 5 ♣ K 4 3

as 12 + 2 = 14.

♠ K Q 5 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ K 7 6 5 ♣ 5 4 3

Easiest method, one fewer than four Kings (12) is 11.

Where at least two cards are held in each denomination, the method is as follows: *Take the count of the paired cards and then add what is left.*

♠ A K 7 ♥ A K 5 4 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 5 4 2

By now you should know without counting that A K = 7. Two sevens = 14 + 4 = 18. This is a whole step shorter than saying that three fours = 12, two threes = 6, 12 + 6 = 18.

♠ A Q 2 ♥ A 7 6 ♦ Q 4 3 2 ♣ Q 5 4

The A Q is known to be 6; so two 6's = 12 + 2 (for the Queen left over) = 14.

Hands like this can be counted fairly quickly as just stated, but if the player is willing to memorize three combinations

of cards, the number of steps can be reduced to one and the count of the hand obtained instantaneously.

Learn to recognize as units:

A K, A K as 14 points
A Q, A Q as 12 points
K Q, K Q as 10 points

By always trying to remember the count of these holdings before obtaining them, you will soon impress them on your memory.

Then the count of the two hands above will simply go 14 (A K, A K) + 4 = 18; and 12 (A Q, A Q) + 2 = 14. Note that the Aces and Kings or Queens do not have to be in the same suit.

♠ A 7 6 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ K 5 4 3 ♣ A 7 6

should also be recognized as a unit of 14.

♠ A K 7 ♥ A K 5 ♦ A K 4 3 ♣ A K 2

The count of this hand, if you are ever lucky enough to hold it, can quickly be seen to be 4 x 7, or 28. Substitute a Queen for one of the Kings, and it would be 28 less 1, or 27—and so on.

♠ K Q 7 ♥ K Q 5 4 ♦ K 6 2 ♣ 6 4 3

comes out 10 (K Q, K Q) + 3 = 13.

♠ A Q 7 ♥ A Q 5 4 ♦ A Q 2 ♣ J 6 3

can be easily obtained as 3 x 6 = 18 + 1 = 19.

♠ K Q 7 ♥ K Q 5 ♦ K 4 3 ♣ Q 6 4 2

is very easy—3 x 5 = 15.

N.B. Naturally, the methods just stated give only the high-card count; long-suit credits, or deductions, must be computed separately.

Lesson 3: Substitutions

The combinations in Lessons 1 and 2 are the most useful for faster counting, but they do not cover all hands. The following methods are somewhat more difficult, but should be helpful with other combinations. A K Q is easy to remember as 9 points. Other helpful counts to know are A K J, equals 8; A Q J, equals 7; and K Q J, equals 6.

Mentally substituting one card for another may be a helpful device in counting. A King equals a Queen plus a Knave; each is 3 points. Consequently a King may be considered as a Queen-Knave in reaching the count of 10. Thus, A, K, K can be visualized as A K Q J — 10. Or A x, Q J x, Q J x, may also be visualized as A K Q J — 10. Or take such combinations as A Q J, A x x. Consider one Ace as a King and add 1 point; you then have A K Q J + 1 = 11. With K Q J, K x x, consider one King to be an Ace, and you have A K Q J − 1 = 9.

Obviously, this is not so good as the combinations in Lesson 1, but still it may be helpful for those who are willing to use their imaginations.

In the type of hand in Lesson 2, consisting mainly of only two denominations, combinations containing the Knave were not given. These combinations are rather easy to count without any method, as the unit (Knave) is easy to add or subtract. In addition to A K, A Q and K Q there

are also A J, K J, and Q J. The reader may learn to recognize these as 5, 4, and 3 and A J + A J as 10; K J + K J as 8; and Q J + Q J as 6. However, these combinations are fairly easy to add in the normal way. It may, therefore, seem best to the reader not to bother with them.

Book II

Expert Bidding with the Point-Count

CHAPTER VI

Opening One No-trump Bids and Responses

VALUATION TABLE FOR OPENING NO-TRUMP BIDS

Ace = 4 points
King = 3 points
Queen = 2 points
Knave = 1 point
Total Points in the Pack = 40
Average Hand = 10

Only the count for honours (A, K, Q, and J) is used in computing opening one no-trump bids. However, when partner raises in no-trumps, if opener's hand contains a five-card suit headed by two high cards, an extra credit of one point should be taken. An extra point should also be added for all four Aces.

REQUIREMENTS FOR OPENING BIDS OF ONE NO-TRUMP

1. 16–18 points in high cards
2. A balanced distribution; that is,
   4–3–3–3
   4–4–3–2

5–3–3–2
6–3–2–2 (exceptionally)

3. Three suits must be protected, and the minimum holding in a doubleton suit is Q x.

1. This represents a hand containing from about 3½ to 4½ honour-tricks. Sixteen points is a good hand in high cards, and should offer ample protection for the opener except under extremely adverse circumstances. Hands counting 19–21 are too strong for a one no-trump bid and should be opened with one of a suit so that a game will not be missed. A raise for one no-trump is 8 points, whereas a suit-bid will be kept open with 6, and sometimes even 5 points; accordingly, if a 19-point hand is opened with one no-trump, partner will pass with 7 points, thereby missing a game.

2. Hands containing a singleton should not be opened with a no-trump bid—even if the singleton be an Ace. (A semi-two-suiter—5–4–2–2 distribution—is also undesirable.) There are two reasons for this: firstly, unless partner turns out to be quite strong in the suit, the singleton represents a menace: an opponent's five-card suit is likely to be quickly established; and secondly, such unbalanced hands are well adapted to suit play if a satisfactory trump suit can be found. Such hands may, and frequently do, eventually land in no-trumps; but first, suit possibilities should be explored *via* an opening bid in a suit.

Examples:

♠ A 7 2 (4) ♥ A Q 4 (6) ♦ J 5 3 2 (1) ♣ K Q 6 (5)
Total: 16 points, a minimum holding. Or

♠ A 4 3 2 (4) ♥ A K 6 (7) ♦ Q J 5 (3) ♣ A 4 3 (4)
Total: 18 points, a maximum holding.

Responses

Count honours at face value (4–3–2–1). Take an added point, when raising partner in no-trumps, for a five-card suit headed by Q–10, K, or better.

26 points in the combined hands will produce a favourable play for game

33 points in the combined hands will produce a favourable play for small slam

37 points in the combined hands will produce a favourable play for grand slam.

25-Point Hands

Twenty-six points will normally produce a better-than-even play for game. But even 25 points will frequently produce game, with favourable breaks in the play. Normally, 25 points offers a worse-than-even play for game—say 37–40 per cent. Therefore, the loss in reaching game with 25 points is never great; in fact, when both sides are vulnerable it is definitely advantageous to bid game with 25 points, since the rubber bonus is 500 points.

In the Culbertson System there are no rescue bids.[1] Consequently, any response shows some strength. Even the 'sign-off,' an apparent exception, requires some honour strength in addition to a six-card suit.

Eight points are required for a suit response to one no-trump; either 8 points in high cards, or at least 6 points in high cards plus distributional credits.

With less strength, the proper procedure is to pass, because the combined hands at best will have a doubtful play for game: 7 + 18 (maximum holding) equals only 25.

[1] Except when partner has been doubled.

Raises at No-trumps

Raises are given only with balanced hands (hands which do not contain a singleton).

Bids for game—With 8– 9 points—raise to two no-trumps
With 10–14 points—raise to three no-trumps

Bids for slam—With 15–16 points—raise to four no-trumps
With 17–18 points—raise to six no-trumps
With 19–20 points—bid three in a suit, then six no-trumps
With 21 points—raise to seven no-trumps

Game bidding at no-trumps is very simple. With fewer than 8 points, the partnership cannot have 26 points. Therefore, pass. With 8 or 9 points, the partnership may, or may not, have 26 points. Therefore, bid two no-trumps. Partner will pass with 16, but with 17 or 18 will bid three no-trumps. In the worst event the partnership lands in three no-trumps with 25 points.

With 10–14 points, the partnership should definitely be in game (10 + 16 = 26), but cannot have a slam (14 + 18 = only 32); consequently three no-trumps is the bid, and this should always close the auction.

With 15 or 16 points in responder's hand—about a minimum no-trump opening in itself—there is no slam if partner has a minimum. Four no-trumps is the response, inviting a slam. Partner passes with 16 (16 + 16 = only 32); with 18 he bids six no-trumps; and with 17 he bids five no-trumps.

With a biddable five-card suit and 15–16 points, responder should bid three in the suit, followed by four no-trumps.

With 17 or 18, a small slam should be bid (17 + 16 = 33). But there is no grand slam (18 + 18 = only 36). With a biddable five-card suit, bid three in the suit, followed by five no-trumps, offering partner a choice of contracts.

With 19 or 20, invite the grand slam by jumping in a suit, followed by six no-trumps. This is stronger than bidding six no-trumps directly, which should close the bidding.

With 21 points bid seven no-trumps (21 + 16 = 37).

These slam tables need not be memorized, because they are based on a definite principle, which can be easily applied by the player if he understands it.

Add your points to partner's minimum (16). If the total is 26 or more, 33 or more, or 37 or more, *make sure* of getting to the game or slam.

Add your points to partner's maximum (18). If the total is 26 or 27, 33 or 34, 37 or 38, *invite* partner to bid the game or slam.

Bid two no-trumps on the following 8- to 9-point hands:

1. ♠ A 6 3 ♥ 10 7 4 2 ♦ K J 5 4 ♣ 6 5
8 points.

2. ♠ Q 7 6 ♥ 4 3 ♦ K Q 6 4 2 ♣ 5 4 3
8 points (7 + 1).

3. ♠ J 5 4 ♥ K Q 3 2 ♦ 8 7 ♣ K 6 4 3
9 points.

Bid three no-trumps on the following 10- to 14-point hands:

Hands 1 and 2 above, plus a Queen.
Hand 3 above, plus a Knave.

4. ♠ A 5 4 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ Q J 6 4 ♣ Q 5
14 points.

5. ♠ K 3 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ 8 7 4 ♣ A Q 5 3 2
10 points (9 + 1).

Bid as indicated on the following 15- to 16-point hands:

6. ♠ A 7 2 ♥ K Q 6 5 ♦ Q J 4 3 ♣ K 6
15 points. Bid four no-trumps.

7. ♠ K Q 2 ♥ A 5 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ A Q 5 4 3
16 points (15 + 1). Bid three clubs, then four no-trumps.

Bid as indicated on the following 17- to 18-point hands:

8. ♠ A Q 7 ♥ K Q 5 3 ♦ Q J 6 4 ♣ K 8
17 points. Bid six no-trumps.

9. ♠ K Q 4 ♥ A 6 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ A Q 4 3 2
18 points (17 + 1). Bid three clubs, then five no-trumps.

Forcing Take-outs

With 12 points and a five-card suit, or 10 points and a six-card suit, or with a better hand, a jump bid of three of the long suit is in order. This bid indicates a sure game and should also be employed when a slam is in view. This bid is forcing to game, but does not require so strong a hand as when partner opened in a suit, because here partner's hand is known to be better than a minimum, and in addition, a fit is assured.

Where a slam is in view, the forcing take-out is preferable to a jump in no-trumps because it is possible that the hands may play better in the suit. Also, partner will know that part of the announced strength is in length and strength of a suit and that, consequently, there may be the danger that the opponents have two Aces, if opener has only one Ace.

Examples:

♠ K Q 7 5 2 ♥ A 6 4 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ 5 3
13 points (12 + 1). Bid three spades.

♠ A 7 ♥ K Q 6 5 4 ♦ A Q J 2 ♣ 4 3

18 points (16 + 2). Bid three hearts.

Re-bids by Opening No-trump Bidder

The opening no-trump bidder has already indicated within narrow limits the strength of his hand. Consequently he should not take any further strenuous action but should show whether his bid is minimum or maximum, show good support for partner's suit or, in certain circumstances, show a four-card major suit.

With a maximum hand he should accept any invitation from partner for game or slam; with a minimum he should decline such invitations.

If partner makes a forcing take-out, opener may raise or bid three no-trumps, but he should not bid beyond game. A slam invitation should come from partner.

In the Culbertson System a minimum suit take-out is forcing for one round. Consequently the opener should respond as follows: he should show a biddable four-card major; with good support for partner's suit he may raise; with a maximum no-trumper and two of the three top honours (A K, A Q, or K Q) in partner's suit he may jump to three no-trumps or four in partner's major suit; if partner bid two in a minor, opener may bid three no-trumps with four to the Ace, King or Queen of partner's suit and a maximum hand; with other holdings he should bid two no-trumps. He may not pass.

Examples:

The bidding went one no-trump—two spades. Holding:

♠ A 6 5 ♥ K 7 5 4 ♦ A Q 4 3 ♣ A 6

17 points. Bid three spades.

♠ K Q 6 ♥ K J 5 ♦ A Q 4 2 ♣ Q J 7

18 points. Bid three no-trumps.

♠ Q J 5 4 ♥ K 6 ♦ A Q J 3 ♣ K Q 2

18 points. Bid four spades.

The bidding went one no-trump—two diamonds. Holding:

♠ K Q 3 2 ♥ A 5 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ A J 6 4

16 points. Bid two spades.

♠ K Q 2 ♥ A 7 ♦ Q 5 4 3 ♣ A J 6 3

16 points. Bid three diamonds.

♠ K Q 6 ♥ A J 5 ♦ A 4 3 2 ♣ K J 7

18 points. Bid three no-trumps.

Responding with Six-Card Suits

When we come to responding with six- or seven-card suits we are really in the realm of suit bidding rather than no-trump bidding. In suit bidding it is not sufficient merely to assign a definite value to each high card; a substantial number of points must also be credited for distributional values.

For purposes of bidding your own six-card suit in response to a no-trump bid, count it as 4 points for length, thus:

♣ K J 8 6 4 3 = 8 points (4 + 4)

This is counting the suit as though partner had raised it; for when partner has made an opening no-trump bid you can assume that he has trump support for your suit. Using the *3 and 4 Revaluation Count*, you therefore count two points for each card over four in your trump suit, making a total of 4 points in addition to your high-card points.

Similarly a seven-card suit may be counted as 6 points for length, in addition to high cards.

Holding:

♠ 8 7 ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ A K 6 5 3 2 ♣ 7 3

the correct bid over one no-trump is three no-trumps. Seven points in high cards, plus 4 for the six-card suit, makes 11. Added to partner's minimum of 16, this insures the necessary 26 points. Another example would be:

♠ 6 4 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ Q J 6 5 4 2 ♣ 8 6

This also totals 11 points. If the suits in these hands were majors, a response of two in the suit would be correct. Partner's next bid would then indicate whether game should be bid in the major suit or no-trumps. (Remember, in the Culbertson System a response of two in a suit is forcing for one round.)

A six-card suit opposite a no-trump is always worth 4 points if played in that suit; but if played at no-trumps a suit must obviously be establishable to be worth this credit; that is, it must be possible for declarer to run it eventually. Note that the suits in the examples above fulfil this condition. When the suit is weak and entries are absent or insufficient, the long suit becomes a sheer gamble at no-trumps, and success will depend on partner's length and strength in the suit and on the way the suit breaks. Such suits should be valued for no-trump play at only 1, 2 or 3 added points, depending on the probability of success in running the suit.

♠ K 7 6 4 3 2 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 6 4

7 points, but only at spades, as the suit may not come in at no-trumps. Pass.

With six spades to the K–J, however (8 points at spades), two spades should be bid; over two no-trumps, the bid is then three spades, which is a sign-off and urges partner to pass. Partner

must pass, not having been strong enough to bid game on the previous round.

With fewer than 8 points, passing is the best procedure. It is better to take the loss at one no-trump than court worse trouble by attempting to rescue.

Here are some examples of suits which may not be establishable at no-trumps, when responder has no outside entry:

1. A x x x x x. If partner holds K–x, K–Q, or K–J, the suit cannot be run. If partner has three cards in the suit it can be run ordinarily, but the play may require giving up a trick as a safety play to insure its run. Count the suit-length at only 2 points—6 points in all.

2. A J x x x x. This is a little better. There is a chance to run the suit even though partner has a doubleton. Count 3 points—a total of 8 points for no-trumps, 9 for the suit-bid. Bid two in the suit and rebid three on the next round—a sign-off.

3. A Q x x x x. Partner's minimum holding is K–x, or J–x–x, consequently the suit may be considered establishable. The slight risk that opponents can stop it must be taken. 10 points for no-trump. Bid two in the suit, followed by three no-trumps.

If any of the suits in examples 1, 2 and 3 are major suits, the eventual place for game—if the combined count calls for it—could well be in the major suit—especially if your hand is unbalanced.

Very weak six-card suits, headed by a Knave or lower card, are not worth quite 4 points for no-trumps, even with several re-entries, because of the time which may be required to establish them. Before they can be run, there is a good chance the opponents will have established their own suit.

With other six- and seven-card suits, a player must decide in a similar manner how good is the chance of running them, and discount their value accordingly for no-trump play.

A seven-card suit to Q–J: 9 points—3 for the Q–J and 6 points for seven-card length. If the seven-card suit is a minor suit, bid 2 in your suit and rebid 3 of the suit after your partner's next response. If this seven-card suit is a major, bid 2 in your major suit and go on to game if partner raises you; otherwise sign off on your next response in 3 of the suit.

Slam Bidding

With no long suit, or only a five-card suit, it is possible to bid slams very accurately on point-count alone. But when the responding hand has a six- or seven-card suit this is no longer the case. With no long suit, the total value of all points is 40. Consequently, the more points held by your side, the fewer are left for your opponents; all they can have is what is left out of the 40 points. So if you have 33 points in high cards, they cannot hold two Aces (8 points).

If the 33 points are partially based on long-suit valuation, as with a six- or seven-card suit, it is quite possible for the opponents to have 11 points in high cards, *including 2 Aces*. On the other hand, simply to disregard the long-suit valuation would result in missing many slams.

This type of slam bidding is actually not no-trump bidding but suit bidding, which is covered in detail later on (Chapter XV).

In order to bid a slam in suit bidding, the following requirements must be met in addition to the required count (33 points). Either the trump suit must be solid, and two first and one second-round control must be held in other suits; or the trump suit may have one loser, if the other three first-round controls are held.

Therefore, in bidding slams with long suits, both the opening bidder and the responder must be *control-conscious*.

They must realize that the *particular* cards they hold may be as important as how much they count. Without an Ace, the responder should slightly discount his values. When the opening one no-trump bidder has only one Ace, or a two or three no-trump bidder has only two Aces, he should be reluctant to bid a slam when partner has indicated a long suit by his rebidding it.

Because of the great advantage of using the call of four no-trumps as simply a *raise* in no-trump, it is inadvisable to use the Blackwood Convention after an opening no-trump bid. In place of it, Asking Bids are recommended. First an agreed trump suit is established by a forcing take-out, after which an Asking Bid is made. Depending on the response to the Asking Bid, the final bid is made in no-trumps or a suit.

Examples of Slam Bidding:

Partner bids one no-trump, and you hold:

♠ 8 ♥ A Q 7 4 ♦ K Q 6 5 3 2 ♣ 5 4

This hand, at suit valuation, has a value of 16 points opposite partner's no-trump: 11 points in high cards, 4 for the six-card suit, and 1 for the second suit of four cards. There may be a slam, therefore, if partner has 17 or 18 points rather than 16.

The suggested bid is three diamonds, followed by four hearts. The forcing bid, followed by the reverse at the four-level, will strongly indicate slam possibilities. From here on partner must take over the decision. This decision should depend more on the particular cards he holds than on his exact point-count. He knows that responder's strong bidding is based partly on distribution, and that Aces in the off-suits, spades and clubs, are much more desirable than

Kings, Queens, and Knaves. Holding the following hand, 18 points:

♠ K Q 6 ♥ K 5 3 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ K Q J 5

he should bid four no-trumps. This is not a slam try, but suggests that partner should either pass or go to five diamonds. The great second- and third-round strength in spades and clubs is not likely to be valuable to partner; it suggests the dreaded duplication of values.

Another example:

♠ K Q 6 ♥ K 5 3 ♦ A 6 4 ♣ A 5 4 2

This hand is not unfavourable for a slam, with two Aces and the King of hearts, but it has only 16 points, so five diamonds is opener's best reply over responder's four hearts.

♠ A J 5 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ A 5 4 3

Opener should bid six diamonds. Though he has a minimum in points, he has just the right cards for a slam. The three Aces guarantee complete control of the hand. Give opener the Knave of hearts, instead of the Knave of spades, and the slam bid is even more obvious.

♠ K Q 6 ♥ K 5 3 ♦ A 7 4 ♣ A Q 6 2

With this—18 points—opener should bid five no-trumps. This asks partner to take a choice between no-trumps and diamonds for the slam. A maximum no-trumper with two Aces indicates a favourable play for slam.

It may appear to the reader that the point-count is defective because it is quite possible that 33 or more points may not produce a slam. Actually, 33 points always indicate the *probability* of twelve tricks. But it is a paradox in bridge that one side may have twelve or thirteen tricks and still

take only ten or eleven. That side's tricks are taken only after the opponents have cashed *their* tricks.

Responding with Unbalanced Hands

We have seen that unbalanced hands (hands containing a singleton) should not be opened at no-trumps. It is equally true that a raise in no-trumps should not be given with an unbalanced hand. The reason for this is that an unbalanced hand is much better adapted to suit play. The singleton, so frequently a menace at no-trumps, is an asset at a sound suit contract. It assures that one trick at most can be won by opponents in that suit, as compared with a possible four, five, or even six tricks at no-trumps. This does not mean that such hands may not eventually play at no-trumps; it does mean, however, that an effort should first be made to fit them up at a suit contract, and that partner should be warned about a possible weakness at no-trumps.

The principle should also be followed where partner's no-trump call is not an *opening* bid. With a singleton, do not raise the no-trumper—show an unbalanced hand by making some other call. A player will save many thousands of points in a few months by following this principle.

The one important exception to this rule is where the singleton is in the suit bid by partner. Here it may be right to raise the no-trumper; especially if the singleton is an honour card.

A minimum of 8 points (including distributional points) is needed to justify a bid over partner's one no-trump. With fewer, it is more prudent to leave him at a contract of one-odd, even if it is evident that a better contract of two in a suit is available. If the one no-trump should be doubled, a run-out to two in the suit will clearly indicate weakness.

Where fewer than 6 points in high cards are held, partner's no-trump bid should never be raised, but the suit should be re-bid at the three-level as a sign-off. For instance, if partner bids one no-trump and you hold:

♠ A J 6 5 3 2 ♥ 7 6 4 ♦ 8 ♣ 5 3 2

9 points, but only 5 in high cards, bid two spades. Over two no-trumps, re-bid three spades.

With a five- or six-card minor suit and a singleton, bid that suit rather than raise no-trumps immediately. Holding:

♠ 8 ♥ J 6 4 3 ♦ A K 7 3 2 ♣ 5 4 2

9 points. Bid two diamonds. Partner may bid two hearts, or if he bids two spades, the worry about that suit is greatly reduced. You would obviously raise hearts and re-bid no-trumps over spades.

With a 4–4–4–1 distribution, bid two in the minor suit even though it is very weak. This permits partner to rebid two hearts or two spades. If he is able to do so, a good major-suit contract is assured. Holding:

♠ Q 7 6 4 ♥ A Q 5 3 ♦ 2 ♣ J 8 4 3

9 points. Bid two clubs.

♠ J 6 4 3 ♥ A J 5 2 ♦ 8 ♣ J 6 4 2

only 7 points. Pass.

CHAPTER VIII

Opening Two and Three No-trump Bids and Responses

Requirements

The count required for a two no-trump bid is 22 to 24 points.

The count required for a three no-trump bid is 25 to 27 points.

In both bids: 1. The hand must have balanced distribution. 2. All four suits should be protected.

♠ A Q 7 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ A J 10 5 ♣ A Q 2

22 points. Bid two no-trumps. With a small diamond instead of the Knave, bid one diamond.

♠ A Q 7 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ A Q J 5 ♣ A Q 2

24 points. Bid two no-trumps. With A K J 5 in diamonds in place of A Q J 5, the hand is worth 25 points. Bid three no-trumps.

With a solid long suit and a tenaced position, an opening three no-trump bid may be made with 23 or 24 high-card points:

♠ K 2 ♥ A K 6 ♦ K 2 ♣ A K Q J 8 3

23 points. Bid three no-trumps.

Responses to Two No-trump Bids

With 3–8 points, raise to three no-trumps.

$24 + 8 = 32$, consequently with only 8 points there will be no slam.

Most writers give 4 points as the minimum for a raise. A moment's consideration, however, will expose the fallacy of this requirement. If the responder passes with 3 points (a King, or a Queen and a Knave), he will stay out of three no-trumps when partner has 22 points and the partnership, 25—a dubious advantage, as 25-point hands often make game. But he will *miss* an odds-on play for game if his partner has 23 or 24 points, giving the partnership 26 or 27 points respectively. Missed games spell missed opportunities —at least in rubber bridge—which only too frequently do not recur.

With a five-card major and 3 points in high cards, or any six-card major, show the major, especially with unbalanced distribution. With a minor suit, don't bother to bid it unless there is the possibility of a slam.

With more than 8 points, a slam will be a possibility or a certainty. The principle for reaching a slam is the same as after a one no-trump bid. Add your points to partner's minimum and maximum, 22 and 24. If the first sum is 33 or 37, you can bid a small or a grand slam. If the sum is below these levels, add your points to your partner's maximum (24). If this total is 33 or 37, invite the slam, and partner will decide whether it should be bid or not. The table of responses derived from this principle follows:

With 9–10 points, bid four no-trumps. Partner should bid six with 24, five with 23, and pass with 22.

With 11–12 points, bid six no-trumps.

With 13–14 points, invite seven by bidding three in a suit, then jumping to six no-trumps.

With 15 points, bid seven no-trumps.

Responses to Three No-trump Openings

Any bid over an opening three no-trumps should be construed as a slam try (though the bid of four spades or hearts is the mildest sort of try, as it denies the ability to bid five).

Show a five-card suit, with 5 points in high cards.

♠ K 10 6 5 4 ♥ Q 7 3 ♦ 7 4 3 ♣ 7 2

Bid four spades.

With 6–7 points, bid four no-trumps.

With 8–9 points, bid six no-trumps.

With 10–11 points, bid four diamonds (an artificial bid), then six no-trumps. NOTE: Four spades or four hearts might be passed, and four clubs asks for Aces.

With 12 points, bid seven no-trumps.

The handling of six-card suits after two or three no-trump openings is the same as after a one no-trump bid.

The value of such a length is 4 points when played in that suit. However, for slam purposes, the suit must be strong enough to ensure only one loser, at most; otherwise, a slam may be impossible in the suit, or in no-trumps if the suit has to be relied on for tricks. As stated previously, suits of this length involve suit-slam bidding rather than no-trump bidding. Once the trump suit is determined to be adequate, if there is doubt about the presence of enough Aces, asking bids should be used.

Failing to take a substantial credit for six- or seven-card suits for fear that opponents may hold two Aces, is not the

solution here. Many laydown slams will be missed where the controls *are* present.

For instance, consider the following hand, given as an example by Charles Goren:

♠ K Q 10 x x x ♥ x ♦ x x ♣ K x x x

Partner opens two no-trumps. He states, 'Bid four spades . . . You have 8 points in high cards. If partner has 24, you will have 32, which with a good six-card suit will sometimes be enough for a slam.'

Now, I have analysed a considerable number of 22-point hands and have yet to find one which did not offer a better-than-even play for six spades. Four spades, a mild slam try which is usually passed by the opener because it denies ability to bid beyond game, is a gross underbid.

Taking a proper valuation of 4 points for the six-card suit, the hand is worth 12 points. This, added to 22, equals 34—enough for a slam. However, the opponents can theoretically have two Aces. Consequently, four clubs should be bid, followed by six spades if partner shows three Aces.

The reader will probably find it possible to set up some no-trump hands which will offer a poor play for a slam combined with the above hand.

Slam bidding, however, is not an exact science, any more than other phases of contract bidding. The best players, using the most advantageous conventions, cannot invariably arrive at favourable slam contracts. In fact, it can be categorically stated that if you never arrive at a slam for which there is no play at all, you are under-bidding, and you will miss many favourable slam contracts.

Examples:

Partner opened two no-trumps; you hold:

♠ Q 10 6 ♥ J 8 6 2 ♦ 9 5 4 ♣ 8 4 2

3 points. Bid three no-trumps. With ♥ 10 instead of ♥ J pass.

♠ K Q 5 3 ♥ K 9 4 2 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ 9 7

10 points. Bid four no-trumps. Without ♦ Q, bid only three.

♠ K Q J 8 4 3 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ 6 5 2 ♣ 8

10 points for spades. Bid four spades. If partner's hand is a maximum, there might be a slam. The four-spade bid is the mildest sort of slam suggestion, as it denies the strength to bid beyond game.

♠ 7 4 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ Q 7 ♣ Q 9 6 4 3 2

4 points. Bid three no-trumps; there is no point in showing the clubs. If the clubs were spades (or hearts), bid three spades (or three hearts).

♠ A Q 8 ♥ K 6 2 ♦ Q 6 4 2 ♣ 9 3 2

11 points. Bid six no-trumps.

Partner opened three no-trumps; you hold:

♠ 9 4 2 ♥ A J 7 3 ♦ Q 9 5 4 ♣ 8 6

7 points. Bid four no-trumps. Without ♦ Q, pass.

♠ 8 3 2 ♥ Q J 10 5 4 ♦ K J 6 4 ♣ 5

9 points for hearts, 7 in high cards. Bid five hearts, a direct invitation. If partner has three Aces, six hearts should be a favourable contract. The heart suit cannot have more than one loser.

♠ Q J 6 ♥ A 9 3 2 ♦ 9 3 2 ♣ K J 8

11 points. Bid four diamonds and follow with six no-trumps, inviting partner to bid seven with a maximum holding.

SUMMARY

No-trump Opening Bids

To secure the count of your hand, total your high-card points. The only additional credit in opening no-trump valuation is 1 point for hands containing all four Aces.

Open with one no-trump with 16–18 points and balanced distribution. The hand must have no worthless doubleton, and at least three suits must be stopped.

Open with two no-trumps with 22–24 points, a balanced hand and all four suits stopped.

Open with three no-trumps with 25–27 points, a balanced hand and all four suits stopped.

With hands that otherwise qualify for a no-trump bid but contain (*a*) fewer than 16 points: bid one of a suit, follow up with one no-trump; (*b*) 19–20 points: bid one of a suit, then follow up with two or three no-trumps. If your partner responded at the two level with a lower ranking suit, bid three no-trumps. With 21 points in high cards, jump shift in another suit, if your partner responds at the two level with a lower ranking suit.

Responding to Opening One No-trump Bids

If both hands are balanced, about 26 points are required for a game in no-trump. Consequently, as a responder with no five-card suit:

With less than 8 points, pass.

With 8–9 points, bid two no-trumps.

With 10–14 points, bid three no-trumps.

With more points, make a slam try.

With a five-card suit headed by K, or Q–10, or better, and an otherwise balanced hand, responder needs 1 point fewer.

OPENING TWO AND THREE NO-TRUMP BIDS

With unbalanced hands (a six-card suit, two five-card suits, etc.) responder should value his hand in suit valuation, and with adequate support for his suit (or suits) guaranteed by the no-trump opening itself, responder should bid his suit rather than raise partner in no-trumps. (With sufficient count, responder should jump in his own suit.)

For a small slam in no-trumps, 33 points in the combined hands are necessary if both hands are balanced.

Any suit take-out of a one no-trump bid is a one-round force. Then a re-bid of the same suit at a minimum level is a sign-off.

CHAPTER VII

Opening Bids of One in a Suit

In no-trump bidding, where there is usually no long suit, we have seen that the level of the contract is determined by the combined high-card strength. This type of bidding is carried over into suit bidding in many hands where both partners have balanced distribution. For instance:

North	South
1 ♣	1 ♠
1 NT	?

North indicates a balanced hand with 12 to 15 points in high cards. If South should also have a balanced hand, 4–3–3–3 for instance, he can determine how much to bid, exactly as he did in no-trump bidding, by adding his points to 12 and to 15. Thus, with 10 points he would pass; with 11 or 12 he would bid two no-trumps—which partner will pass with 12 and usually with 13; or with 13 to 17 points he would bid three no-trumps. Therefore, with hands containing balanced distribution, there are no complications; just add up the points.

Unbalanced hands, however, or hands with six-card or longer suits, cannot be judged solely by the high cards. Consider these two hands:

1. ♠ A 4 2 ♥ J 7 5 ♦ Q 6 3 ♣ A K 7 5

14 high-card points.

2. ♠ A ♥ J x ♦ Q 6 5 ♣ A K 8 6 4 3 2
14 high-card points.

Each hand has 14 points in high cards, but any player would far rather pick up Hand 2. This hand will take many more tricks than the first, and with fair support for clubs in partner's hand, will produce a game or even a slam. Thus, as will shortly be seen, the second hand will be initially valued at 16 compared to 13 for the first hand.

But suppose you hold Hand 2. You bid one club. Your partner responds with one spade and you bid two clubs. Partner then bids two hearts; you bid three clubs. Now your partner bids three hearts. At this point you would be delighted to exchange your hand for Hand 1 above. With that hand you would have a fair chance for game; with your actual hand you are probably in trouble. Thus, it can be seen that the value of unbalanced hands can only be estimated or even guessed at originally. As the bidding develops their value may alter and they may become more valuable or less valuable, unlike no-trump hands whose value remains almost constant throughout the auction. Unbalanced hands must be revalued throughout the bidding, as a good fit or lack of any fit becomes apparent.

Examples:

♠ A K 7 4 3 2. If the outstanding cards are well divided, this suit will produce five tricks at a spade contract. But it may take only two tricks at no-trumps.

♠ A K 7 4 3 2 and ♥ K Q J 10. With a spade break, this two suit holding will take eight tricks at spades, whereas only two to four tricks might be taken at no-trumps. A side suit assumes greater importance at trump play because it can be developed under protection of the trump suit. For this reason, at suit-bids credits are taken for primary and secondary suit lengths. These credits are really only estimates of probable value. Actually they

may not develop at all; thus, it is essential that the opening bid contain sufficient defensive and offensive strength in high cards in case the bidding develops unfavourably.

Opening Bids of One

Ace = 4 points
King = 3 points
Queen = 2 points
Knave = 1 point

The pack contains 40 points (in high cards).
An average hand is 10 points.
Add 1 point for each *trump over four.*
Add 1 point for each *side-suit card over three.*

SEE CHAPTER III FOR CORRECTION POINTS

The following table shows distributions counting 1, 2 and 3 points. This table is simply another (and more complicated) way of expressing the Rule of Three and Four. It is given here so that players will better understand the effect of the count of distributional values.

One five-card suit, or
Two four-card suits. } 1 point

One six-card suit, or
One five and one four-card suit, or
Three four-card suits. } 2 points

One seven-card suit, or
One six and one four-card suit, or
Two five-card suits, or
One five-card suit and two four-card suits. } 3 points

Four or more points constitute a freak hand.

Add the points for suit lengths to the high-card points to obtain the value of the hand.

Most minimum bids are hands which count up to 13 points. This is really a King more than average, which is 10 points. Hands containing a King above average have the values for a bid. Accordingly, hands containing 10 points in honours and 3 points in distributional values often constitute sound openings. But when there are as many as 3 points for suit lengths, the high-card strength declines to *average*, and such hands are dangerous to open unless the high cards are combined in such a way as to produce two defensive winners.

The following table defines 'defensive tricks':

A K	= 2	defensive tricks
A Q	= 1½	defensive tricks
A	= 1	defensive trick
K Q x	= 1	defensive trick
K x	= ½	defensive trick

The purpose of this table is to make sure that opening bids have sufficient high cards for defensive purposes. If 3 or more points are credited for suit length, the high-card strength of some hands which have a sufficient count for bids becomes dangerously low. When your hand contains 12 points in high cards, this factor may be disregarded, but with 11 points or fewer in high cards, hands without two defensive tricks should not be opened.

The table used here is really an abbreviated Culbertson Honour-Trick Table, and other writers on point-count who have really grappled with the difficulties of opening bids have been unable to work out a system without resorting to this table in one form or another.

Of the several corrections, the one fundamental deduction is for unsupported Queens and Knaves. Q x x in a suit is a questionable asset, but the Queen in A Q x or K Q x is a solid value; similarly, the Knave in combination with higher honours.

Now consider a few example hands and see if you can compute their values:

1.	♠ A J 6 2	♥ K 7 4 2	♦ Q 3	♣ A 5 3
2.	♠ A K 6 4 3 2	♥ 7 5	♦ Q	♣ K 8 5 3
3.	♠ A J 4 3	♥ A 5 2	♦ A Q 4	♣ A 7 4
4.	♠ K Q 6 4	♥ Q J 3	♦ Q 4 2	♣ K 7 5
5.	♠ A K 7 3	♥ A Q 2	♦ 10 7 5 4	♣ 5 3

Hand 1. Two Aces = 8, King = 3, Queen = 2, Knave = 1. Total = 14. Add 1 point for four-card side suit. Deduct 1 point for unsupported Queen. Value of hand, 14 points.

Hand 2. Ace = 4, Two Kings = 6, unsupported Queen = 1. Total = 11. Add 2 points for the six-card suit and 1 point for the four-card suit. Hence the hand counts 11 + 3, or 14 points.

Hand 3. Four Aces = 16, Queen = 2, Knave = 1, add 1 point for all four Aces. Total equals 20. No credit for suit length. Value of hand, 20 points.

Hand 4. Two Kings = 6, three Queens = 6, Knave = 1. Total = 13. Deduct 1 point for no Ace and 1 point for unsupported Queen. 13 minus 2 = 11. Value of hand, 11 points.

Hand 5. Two Aces = 8, King = 3, Queen = 2. Total = 13. Add 1 point for four-card diamond length. Value of hand, 14 points.

Requirements for Opening Bids

Hands counting 14 points or more must always be opened in any position—first, second, third, or fourth hand.

Hands counting 13 points have opening bid values. Consequently, they should be opened as a general rule. However,

some hands containing 13 points which have no good re-bid should be passed in first or second position.

Hands counting 12 are likely to fall just below the requirements for sound bids. However, 12-point hands may be opened if they have a good re-biddable suit; or if the 12 points are in high cards and they have a biddable suit and a good re-bid.

Fourteen-Point Hands

Fourteen-point hands must be opened. Nothing further need be said on this subject.

However, a matter of considerable importance is: with what bid should they be opened? A player opening in first or second position is under absolute obligation to re-bid when his partner responds with a minimum call in a new suit. Consequently, when first or second hand, a player should open in such a way as to afford himself a good re-bid over any response by partner. If he has a biddable suit, he should open with that suit unless the bid is going to make it embarrassing for him to rebid. If this is the case, he should open with a three-card minor suit or an unbiddable four-card minor.

What is meant by a biddable or unbiddable suit? In the Culbertson System the following are the minimum biddable suits: Five-card suits headed by the Queen; four-card suits containing two of the four top honours. Thus, the minimum is A J x x, K J x x, or Q J x x. A x x x is not a biddable suit.

Now a word as to the meaning of an unbiddable suit. An unbiddable suit is not one that can *never* be bid in any circumstances. At contract bridge, any bid may be made if it is a lesser evil than its alternatives. An unbiddable suit is one which it is undesirable to bid and which should be avoided if a reasonably satisfactory alternative can be found.

OPENING BIDS OF ONE IN A SUIT

The biddable suit principle should be quite rigidly adhered to in the major suits. In minor suits, however, unbiddable suits and even three-card suits must be frequently opened. These are not desirable bids—even in the minors a biddable suit is much to be preferred. It is merely the best solution for opening 14 to 16-point hands which do not conform to the requirements for no-trump bids. (Note: For *responding* at the one-level, or as a second suit, K x x x or Q 10 x x are considered biddable.)

Three-card minors must be headed by at least the Queen.

One club is the best opening for this type of hand, for it always offers the easy re-bid of one no-trump over any suit response by partner. However, where there is no strength in clubs, a bid of one diamond may be used.

Examples of 14-Point Hands

1. ♠ A J 7 3 ♥ A 9 6 2 ♦ K J 4 ♣ 3 2

13 points in high cards. 1 point for four-card side suit. Bid one spade, intending to bid two hearts if partner bids two clubs. (Note: Biddable suit requirements may be slightly shaded in the second suit.)

2. ♠ A 10 6 5 ♥ K 4 3 2 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ 6 4

13 points in high cards and 1 for side suit = 14. Bid one diamond. Neither major suit is biddable, and if a spade or a heart contract is to be played, it is much better that the bid come from partner. If partner bids two clubs, it will be necessary to rebid a slightly shaky two no-trumps. It is unthinkable to reverse on this hand by bidding two hearts or two spades. This bid requires a higher count and also guarantees four diamonds (and suggests the probability of five). It would be possible initially to bid spades and then hearts, but the opening minor suit-bid is a better solution.

3. ♠ A 7 5 4 ♥ A K Q ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ Q 7 2

15 points in high cards, less 1 for unsupported Queen = 14 points. Bid one club.

4. ♠ Q 7 5 4 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ K 4

13 points, plus 1 for five spades = 14. Bid one spade. The spade suit is not strictly rebiddable, but will have to be rebid over two clubs or two diamonds. Over two hearts, bid three hearts. (Note: A short minor should not be opened when the hand contains a five-card suit.)

5. ♠ A K 5 4 3 ♥ K J 4 2 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ 4

13 points in high cards, 1 for the five-card suit and 1 for the four-card side suit = 15. Deduct 1 for unsupported Queen = 14. Bid one spade. Rebid two hearts unless partner raises the spades.

Note that in Hands 2 and 4 the holder has no satisfactory rebid over all of partner's possible responses. However, as the hands count 14 points, they must be opened, so it is a case of choosing the least unpleasant alternative.

Choice of Suits

Many hands have two or more biddable suits. A very brief statement of the principles governing these hands will be given:

1. With suits of equal length, *as a rule* first bid the higher-ranking suit.

2. With suits of unequal length, *as a rule* first bid the longer suit.

These two 'rules' are subject to many exceptions and are often modified by the 'Principle of Preparedness', which decrees that you must bid in such a way as to be prepared, if possible, for any response by partner.

With two five-card suits, bid the higher ranking first, regardless of their strength. For example, with spades and hearts bid spades first. *Exception:* With five spades and five clubs, open with one club if the clubs are stronger than the spades; or if the spade suit does not contain two of the top four honours.

With a five-card and a biddable four-card suit, bid the five-card suit first except with touching suits. With four spades and five hearts, bid one spade. With four hearts and five diamonds, bid one heart. With four diamonds and five clubs, bid one diamond. However, if the longer suit is also much stronger than the four-card suit, bid and re-bid it, suppressing the higher ranking suit. (Note: This paragraph applies *only* to hands counting less than 18. With a count of 18 or more, open with the longer suit and 'reverse' with the higher-ranking four-card suit.)

Bidding the combinations in the suggested order prescribed by the rule enables you to show both suits without increasing the contract.

If you don't remember all this, merely consider your hand and decide what opening bid will afford you the best re-bid. At bridge it is not sufficient merely to make the obvious bid. A player must think ahead and decide in advance how he proposes to handle most contingencies which are likely to arise.

With two 'touching' four-card suits, bid the higher ranking first. This rule covers three of the six situations, namely spades and hearts, hearts and diamonds, diamonds and clubs. With spades and clubs—non-touching suits—open one club. This always affords you a safe rebid. With hearts and clubs, usually open with one club. With diamonds and spades, there is no blanket answer.[1] If one spade is bid, two hearts by partner may leave you no good response; if one diamond is bid, two clubs has the same effect.

The best solution is the following: with support for hearts, bid one spade. With support for clubs, bid one diamond. With no support for either, bid the stronger suit, planning to re-bid it if the unwelcome response is forthcoming.

[1] A 'blanket' answer is one that covers all cases.

With three biddable four-card suits bid the suit below the singleton. (Going 'round the corner', consider spades—not no-trumps—below clubs.)

If any of this escapes your memory, simply look at your hand, note what response by partner will prove the most embarrassing, and, if possible, bid in such a way that this situation is provided for.

Examples:

♠ A Q 7 4 ♥ 8 3 ♦ A Q 8 4 2 ♣ 6 5

14 points. Bid one diamond—the longest suit.

♠ 6 4 ♥ A Q 9 2 ♦ A Q 8 3 2 ♣ 7 6

14 points. Bid one heart. With touching suits, bid the higher ranking with a four- and a five-card suit. This affords a rebid of two diamonds over any response.

♠ Q J 9 3 ♥ A K J 10 7 ♦ Q 6 ♣ 4 2

13 points. Bid one heart, followed by two hearts, suppressing the spades.

♠ A Q ♥ A Q 9 2 ♦ A Q 8 3 2 ♣ 7 6

20 points. Bid one diamond, intending to reverse with two hearts on the next round.

♠ K J 6 4 2 ♥ 7 6 ♦ 5 ♣ A K Q 8 4

16 points. Bid one spade. (You are good enough to bid clubs next time.)

♠ Q 10 8 3 2 ♥ A 6 ♦ 5 ♣ A 10 8 6 3

13 points. Bid one club.

♠ A K 7 6 4 ♥ 7 6 ♦ 5 ♣ K Q 10 7 2

15 points. Bid one club.

♠ A K J 3 ♥ 7 5 ♦ 9 3 2 ♣ K Q 7 4

14 points. Bid one club.

♠ A K 8 3 ♥ Q 5 2 ♦ A J 9 4 ♣ 8 3

14 points. Bid one spade. Interchange the clubs and hearts and one diamond is the bid.

♠ 7 3 ♥ A J 8 2 ♦ A K 10 6 ♣ J 8 2

14 points. Bid one heart.

♠ K J 8 3 ♥ A J 9 4 ♦ K Q 7 4 ♣ 6

16 points. Bid one spade, the suit below the singleton (going 'round the corner'). Interchange the diamonds and clubs, and one club would be the bid—the suit below the singleton.

Thirteen-Point Hands

Thirteen-point hands are opening bids. However, they are minima. Consequently it is better to pass a small minority of these hands, mainly because opening them may cause embarrassment in the continuation of the bidding.

In first or second position, a 13-point hand should provide a desirable re-bid over any response partner may make. Otherwise a pass is preferable. With 14 points the hand *must* be opened, even though a re-bid may have to be improvised. Without the added point protection it is better to pass than possibly get in trouble.

Consider Examples 2 and 4 under 14-point hands.

2. ♠ A 10 6 5 ♥ K 4 3 2 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ 6 4

One diamond is the best bid. But substitute the Knave of diamonds for the Queen. The hand will now count only 13. The spade suit is not biddable. If one diamond is bid and partner responds two clubs, no reasonable re-bid is available. A two no-trump re-bid with this weak hand would be courting disaster. Consequently the hand must be passed. However, it can be opened third or fourth hand, because after partner has passed there is no obligation to bid again, should he bid two clubs. Now interchange clubs and diamonds. The hand will then be:

♠ A 10 6 5 ♥ K 4 3 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ A J 7

Now the situation is completely altered. An opening bid of one club provides a perfect re-bid over any response; over

one diamond one no-trump should be bid. Consequently the hand should be opened in any position.

4. ♠ Q 7 5 4 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ K 4

One spade must be bid despite the questionable re-bid. But reduce the hand to 13 points:

♠ Q 7 5 4 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ K 7 5 ♣ K 4

In view of the danger inherent in re-bidding so weak a spade suit, it is obviously better to pass. In third or fourth position, however, the hand should be opened, as there is no obligation to re-bid.

♠ K J 6 5 3 ♥ A 4 2 ♦ K J 7 ♣ 8 6

Ace = 4, two Kings = 6, two Knaves = 2, trump suit = 1; total, 13. Here the spade suit can be re-bid comfortably, so the hand should be opened. A re-biddable suit is a five-card suit containing two honours, or any six-card suit. A four-card suit is never strictly re-biddable, but one containing four of the five honours may be re-bid in a pinch, just like a five-card suit which is not technically re-biddable.

♠ A K 6 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ K Q 5 3 ♣ 5 4 2

Ace = 4, two Kings = 6, Queen = 2, four-card side suit = 1; total, 13 points. In first or second position, this hand must be passed. If one spade is bid, a two-heart response is inconvenient; if one diamond, two clubs is embarrassing. Interchange the diamonds and hearts, however, and one spade should be bid, as two hearts is a good re-bid over any response. In third or fourth position, either hand should be opened.

Twelve-Point Hands

Twelve-point hands are on the border-line between a bid and a pass. They may be opened if a good re-biddable suit

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is held. A good re-biddable suit is one headed by three of the five honours. They may also be opened with a biddable suit and 12 points in high cards, or two biddable suits and 11 points in high cards. First or second hand, there must also be a good re-bid over any bid by partner.

Examples:

1. ♠ K J 10 4 2 ♥ A 7 5 ♦ K 6 5 ♣ 7 3
12 points. Bid one spade. Without ♠ 10 the hand is better passed.

2. ♠ A K 7 5 4 2 ♥ K 8 6 ♦ 4 3 ♣ 6 5
12 points. Bid one spade. (or ♠ K Q J 7 5 4 ♥ A 7 5)

3. ♠ A K 4 2 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ 7 6 2
12 points. Pass first- or second-hand—there is no rebid. Third- or fourth-hand, bid one spade.

4. ♠ A 10 6 5 ♥ K 7 4 3 ♦ 6 2 ♣ A 5 3
12 points. Pass--there is no biddable suit.

5. ♠ 8 7 4 ♥ 7 6 ♦ A Q 5 4 ♣ K Q 3 2
12 points. Bid one diamond.

Third-Hand Bids

In third-hand position, weaker bids are permissible (and often advisable) than in any other position. With a re-biddable suit it is good strategy to open 11-point hands in this position, or even on 10 if you are not vulnerable. Of course, these hands are not real bids, but bidding them has proved a winning method. Two purposes are served: firstly, a good opening lead is indicated for your partner; secondly, the bid may impede, at least to a slight extent, the opponents' bidding. Third-hand is quite different from fourth-hand. You are not in a position to have a new deal—

the fourth player will usually open anyway. And in the cases where he would have passed, it will frequently be found that your side has the best hand.

Examples of third-hand lead-directing bids:

1. ♠ A K J 6 3 ♥ Q 7 5 ♦ J 4 2 ♣ 8 7

11 points. Bid one spade.

2. ♠ 8 7 ♥ Q 6 4 2 ♦ 10 3 ♣ A K 5 4 2

11 points. Bid one club.

3. ♠ 6 3 ♥ A Q 7 4 2 ♦ K 6 5 2 ♣ 8 6

11 points. Bid one heart.

Fourth-Hand

Fourth-hand, after three passes, is in a pleasurable situation, for he has the option of throwing the hand in or opening for a probable profit. In one respect, bidding requirements are relaxed: there is no obligation to re-bid; consequently all 13-point hands may be opened. Twelve-point hands, however, without strength in the majors, are better passed out. The slight advantage in points (12 instead of 11, which is about average) is not enough to compensate for the fact that you are likely to be out-bid in a higher-ranking suit.

A holding of three Aces (12 points) is a border-line bid for fourth hand. Due to under-valuation of the Ace the hand is really worth more than 12, and opening fourth-hand, even with a short minor, should yield a slight advantage on the average.

Examples:

1. ♠ A 10 6 3 ♥ K 5 4 2 ♦ A J 7 ♣ 6 5

13 points. Bid one diamond. Pass two clubs by partner.

2. ♠ A 10 6 3 , ♥ K 5 4 2 ♦ A 8 7 ♣ 6 5

12 points. Pass or bid one diamond. This hand is right on the line between a bid and a pass. Strength in both majors gives you a slight advantage.

3. ♠ A K 7 5 4 2 ♥ K 6 3 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 6 4

12 points. Bid one spade.

4. ♠ 6 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ K 5 4 2 ♣ A K 10 5 3

12 points. Pass. Although the hand has the count for a bid, it has no future—you will be outbid in the majors. Strength in the majors, especially spades, is a great inducement to opening fourth-hand. The situation is the reverse of first- and second-hand, where major suits may be deterrent to opening because of re-bid difficulties.

5. ♠ 6 4 ♥ 7 6 ♦ Q 5 3 ♣ A K Q 4 3 2

12 points. Pass. Although a satisfactory opening, the hand has no future, due to major-suit weakness. Change the clubs to spades or hearts, and one spade or one heart should be opened.

Freak Two-suiters

This type of hand, having a six-five, six-six, or seven-five distribution, will count 4 or 5 points for distribution. Hands counting as little as 8 points in high cards (two Aces) should be opened in some cases. Singleton honours (except the Ace) should be given little consideration. Naturally, hands counting 10 in high cards (leaving out singleton honours) should be opened. In addition to this, any such hand having a sure trick in each long suit should be opened.

Examples:

1. ♠ A 9 7 6 4 3 (6) ♥ 8 ♦ A 6 5 3 2 (6) ♣ 7

Only 12 points. But open with one spade.

2. ♠ 8 ♥ K Q 6 5 3 2 (7) ♦ 7 ♣ A 6 5 4 3 (6)

13 points. Open one heart.

Hands of comparable strength with one suit headed only by a King or Queen are exactly border-line hands, and may be opened or not as a player prefers.

Examples:

1. ♠ A Q 7 6 4 3 ♥ 7 ♦ K 6 5 4 2 ♣ 7
2. ♠ A K 6 5 4 ♥ 4 3 ♦ Q 8 6 5 4 2 ♣ —

SUMMARY

Opening Bids of One in a Suit

With 14 points or more always open the bidding.

With 13 points usually open the bidding. Pass first or second-hand if your hand does not contain a satisfactory re-bid. Usually pass fourth-hand with only 11 points in high cards and only minor suits.

With 12 points open first or second-hand only with a good re-biddable suit, or with 12 points in high cards, a biddable suit and a good re-bid, or with 11 points in high cards and two biddable suits.

Choice of Suits

When opening first or second-hand, you *guarantee* a re-bid, unless partner makes a weak, limited response, such as a simple raise or one no-trump.

In third and fourth position, you are under no such obligation, but you will *wish* to make a re-bid if your hand is above the minimum zone (at least 15–16 points).

In either case, in choosing *which* suit to bid first, prepare to re-bid in such a way as to avoid landing at a level higher

than justified by the strength of your hand. *This is the rinciple of Preparedness.*

When you have suits of unequal length, bid the longer one first. *This is the Principle of Picturing your Hand.*

At times these principles will be in conflict with each other; at other times they may be in conflict with the requirements for a biddable suit. If that is so, the player must make a decision as to which principle or requirement he should violate. Bear in mind that the Principle of Preparedness is the most important. Some of the following rules, therefore, may be modified, and when such modification is permissible they are marked accordingly.

Rules as to Choice of Suits

Divided	Your Choice Should Be
6-6	Bid the higher ranking suit first.
6-5	Bid the longer suit first. (P)[1]
5-5	Bid the higher ranking suit first. (Exception: some hands with five spades and five clubs)
5-4	Bid the longer suit first. (P)[1]
4-4-4-1	Bid the suit below the singleton. (B)[2]
4-4-3-2	If the suits are "touching" (spades-hearts, hearts-diamonds, diamonds-clubs), bid the higher ranking one. If they are not touching, bid the lower ranking one. (B)[2]

[1] (P) stands for: may be modified to conform with Principle of Preparedness.

[2] (B) stands for: may be modified to conform with requirement for biddable suit.

CHAPTER IX

Responses to Suit-Bids of One

Responses may be placed in three categories, according to strength.

I. Hands of Only Moderate Strength

Unless partner has considerably more than a minimum, game will be impossible. The point-count for such hands extends from a minimum of 5 points to a maximum of 10. This category is comprised of the following three bids:

1. The response of one no-trump.
2. The single raise in partner's suit.
3. The response *of one* in a new suit—a 'one-over-one'.

Bids which have a very narrow range are known as 'limit bids'. The responses of one no-trump and a single raise are in this class. If you open with one heart and your partner responds two hearts, you know that partner's hand ranges from rather weak to moderately good support. In other words, if your opening is minimum or close to minimum, at two hearts you might: (*a*) be down one; (*b*) just make two-odd; (*c*) possibly make three-odd. But you won't make four. Partner's holding will range from 6 points to 10 points. With your own 13 or 14, you have a combined maximum of 23 or 24, whereas 26 points are required for a favourable play for game in a major suit.

If your partner responds with one no-trump, you know that he has a hand ranging from 6 points minimum to a maximum of 10. As a rule he has balanced distribution (although he might possibly have a singleton in your suit if you opened with a major).

These two bids define responder's hand within narrow limits. Not so the third bid, a response of one in a new suit. This, in many cases, is a bid falling in the category of weak responses—in fact it is, at its minimum, the weakest response in the game. This is hard for many players to understand; but it follows a general principle of contract that the lowest bid, that is, the cheapest, can be the weakest. On the other hand, the one-over-one has the widest range of values of any bid in the game. For the bidding sequence:

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	

The one-spade bid might show the following hand:

♠ A 7 5 4 3 ♥ 6 2 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ 7 4 3

5 points—4 in high cards; or it might be such a rock-crusher as the following 17-point hand:

♠ A Q 7 5 2 ♥ Q 6 ♦ A 6 5 ♣ K J 4

Thus the one-over-one is an indeterminate bid. It may be a comparatively weak response, it may be a constructive bid, or it may fall in the class of game-forcing bids. *Which* class it is in will develop on subsequent rounds of bidding. If your hand exceeds 17 points, in response to an opening bid, you should jump shift in your suit, as follows: Opening bidder, one heart; partner, two spades.

The Response of One No-trump

As previously stated, one no-trump should be bid in response on hands ranging from 6 to 10 points; they are normally hands of balanced distribution, but might have a singleton in partner's suit if it is a major suit; they usually have no five-card suit, but may contain a five-card, or exceptionally even a six-card, lower-ranking suit. If the suit were higher-ranking, a one-over-one response would be in order. Only high-card points are counted for no-trump responses. Six points is the minimum requirement, but the requirement may be shaded to 5 points if the hand contains a ten combined with a higher honour or a 10–9–x–x.

Examples:

Partner bids one heart. With

♠ K 10 7 (3) ♥ K 6 (3) ♦ 7 5 4 3 ♣ 8 6 4 2

6 points, respond one no-trump.

♠ A 6 2 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ Q 7 5 4 ♣ 6 4 3

6 points, respond one no-trump.

♠ A 7 5 ♥ K 3 ♦ K 5 4 3 ♣ 7 5 4 3

10 points, respond one no-trump.

With fewer than 6 points, pass.

Over a one-club opening, the minimum one no-trump response should be about 8 points. A one-over-one response should be used if the bidding is kept open on fewer.

The Single Raise

To raise partner's suit a player must have adequate trump support—four small trumps, three to the Queen, or three to the Knave-ten in a major suit. In practice this is sometimes shaded as low as three small, but only with a

singleton and when any other response seems *more* undesirable. A minor suit, which may possibly be bid on three cards, requires four (or more) trumps for an immediate raise.

A single raise requires adequate trump support and, usually, a minimum of 6 points; the maximum is 10 points.

In special cases (as when there are five trumps or unbalanced distribution in the responding hand) a shaded raise may be given on only 5 points.

For example, partner bids one spade. Holding any of the first six hands following, a raise to two spades is the correct response. You hold:

1. ♠ Q 6 4 3 ♥ 5 2 ♦ K 7 5 4 ♣ 4 3 2

7 points. 5 points in high cards plus 2 points for the difference in trump length and the shortest suit. Hereafter these points will be called Raise Points.

2. ♠ J 5 3 2 ♥ K 6 ♦ K 7 5 4 ♣ 4 3 2

9 points. 7 points in high cards plus 2 raise points.

3. ♠ Q 7 6 ♥ K 5 4 3 2 ♦ 6 5 ♣ J 7 5

7 points. 6 points in high cards plus 1 raise point.

4. ♠ K 6 5 4 ♥ A K 7 ♦ 8 3 2 ♣ 5 3 2

10 points. 10 points in high cards plus 1 raise point = 11 minus 1 point because of lack of length in a side suit: net total 10 points.

5. ♠ A 7 6 ♥ 6 5 4 3 ♦ K J 4 3 2 ♣ 5

10 points. 8 points in high cards plus 2 raise points.

6. ♠ A 6 5 3 ♥ 4 ♦ Q 7 6 2 ♣ 5 4 3 2

9 points. 6 points in high cards plus 3 raise points.

Minor suits require four trumps for an immediate raise.

The One-Over-One Response

As the cheapest response possible, this bid has the lowest requirements of any response. It may be made on as little

as 5 points. It may also show a big hand, only just short of a forcing take-out.

For example, partner bids one diamond, next opponent passes and you hold:

♠ A 7 6 5 *3* ♥ 4 2 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 5 4 3

5 points (4 plus 1). Bid one spade.

♠ Q 10 7 5 *4 3* ♥ 8 ♦ K 4 3 *2* ♣ 7 5

8 points (5 plus 3). Bid one spade.

♠ 10 8 7 5 *4 3* ♥ 7 3 ♦ K Q 8 ♣ 7 5

7 points (5 plus 2). Bid one spade.

♠ K J 5 3 ♥ 8 2 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ K 7 4 *2*

8 points (7 plus 1). Bid one spade.

Sometimes a hand qualifies either as a one-over-one or as a no-trump response. Prefer generally the one-over-one response. But the suit should be headed by at least the Queen or Knave-ten. It is best to avoid bidding weaker 4-card suits, even in response.

♠ J 7 4 3 (1) ♥ A 6 5 (4) ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ Q 6 5 (2)

7 points. Partner bids one diamond. Bid one no-trump—not one spade.

♠ Q 10 7 6 (2) ♥ A J 4 (5) ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ 8 5 4

7 points. Bid one spade.

In responding with a new suit, points for long suits are counted and added to points for high cards, just as in the opening bid.

II. Intermediate Encouraging Bids

Hands justifying encouraging responses usually count 11–13 points. They are too strong for a weak response; on the other hand, they are not strong enough to force a game.

The proper procedure here is to make two constructive bids, encouraging partner to continue to game if he has a little more than a minimum. A minimum suit response (forcing for one round) is used for this purpose and is followed on the next round by a further encouraging bid—a bid in a new suit, a raise of partner's suit, or a bid of two no-trumps.

The first bid is always a minimum response in a new suit. It may be a one-over-one, or the bid of a new suit at the two-level. Of course, all such bids are not necessarily encouraging—only when responder bids for the second time will his intention become clear.

Examples of one-over-one as an encouraging bid. Partner has opened one heart:

♠ K J 5 3 ♥ 4 3 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ Q J 3 2

12 points (11 plus 1). Bid one spade; if partner bids one no-trump, bid two no-trumps.

♠ A 7 6 5 ♥ K J 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ K 7 5 4

12 points in support of hearts. 11 points in high cards plus 1 raise point. Bid one spade; if partner bids two hearts, bid three hearts.

The minimum response of two in a new suit is used most frequently to represent at least a fairly good hand, but is not necessarily of this type. It may be slightly weaker, and come under the class of mildly encouraging bids, or it may be considerably stronger, the holder's intention being surely to reach game eventually.

This response must be substantially stronger than a *minimum* one-over-one response—the minimum count for a response at the two-level is normally 10 points but may be shaded to 9 points. When the hand is as weak as this, it falls in the upper range of one no-trump responses, but the two-level suit take-out is used when the strength is concentrated

in one suit and consequently the hand is not adapted to no-trumps.

For example, partner bids one heart. You hold:

♠ 8 6 ♥ 5 4 3 ♦ 7 5 2 ♣ A K J 6 5 (9)

9 points. Bid two clubs.

♠ 7 5 4 ♥ 8 ♦ 6 5 2 ♣ A Q J 6 5 3 (9)

9 points. Bid two clubs. The intention on both hands is to pass partner's next bid unless he forces.

Choice of Bids

When your hand qualifies only for one bid—either a single raise for partner's major suit or a response in a new suit—prefer the raise. The reason for this is that such a hand is not good enough for two bids. Consequently, if you bid your suit you cannot show support for partner, and this may be the one thing he needs to know in order to bid game.

For example, partner bids one heart. You hold:

♠ 7 5 ♥ K 6 4 ♦ A J 5 4 3 ♣ 8 4 2

9 points (8 plus 1). 8 points in high cards plus 1 raise point. Bid two hearts. If the diamond holding were in the spade suit, you would bid one spade. The hand is too weak for a two-diamond bid.

♠ A 6 5 4 2 ♥ J 7 6 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 6 5

7 points in support of hearts. Also 7 points for a one-spade bid. Bid two hearts.

However, the bid of two in a new suit indicates a hand containing at least 10 points or more; thus indicating a hand which partner should be encouraged to think in terms of game, but permitted to stop if he has a minimum.

For example, partner bids one spade. You hold:

♠ A J 7 ♥ K Q J 5 ♦ 7 6 5 3 ♣ 4 2

12 points in support of spades. Bid two hearts; if partner bids two spades, raise to three spades.

♠ J 5 4 3 ♥ 8 ♦ A K 7 6 ♣ 6 4 3 2

11 points in support of spades. Bid two diamonds and raise spades on the next round. Partner should not look to responder for four trumps on this bidding, though it is possible that he has four, as above.

♠ 8 6 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ K J 3 ♣ A K 7 6 4

12 points. Bid two clubs and over two spades bid two no-trumps. (Not forcing as a direct two no-trump bid would be.) If partner bids two no-trumps, bid three no-trumps because 26 points are assured, as partner should have 16 points for his two no-trump re-bid.

♠ 6 ♥ 5 4 3 ♦ A K Q 7 6 2 ♣ 5 4 2

11 points. Bid two diamonds, followed by three diamonds (unless partner bids two no-trumps, in which case bid three no-trumps). The bid of three diamonds here is not a sign off on this sequence of bidding, but encourages partner to continue the bidding—preferably, however, not in spades.

Improving the Contract

Almost all bids in contract bridge are to be regarded as forward bids, that is, they encourage partner at least to a slight extent, to go forward toward a game. Sign-offs have lost favour during recent years. Some bids, it is true, indicate that it is probably better for partner to pass but, with an unusually good fit, he is at liberty to over-rule this suggestion. For instance, consider this auction:

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♦	

The bid of three diamonds certainly indicates that the responder believes that this is the best contract to play, but opener, holding a maximum hand with four diamonds to the Ace or King, or with A K x, A Q x, or K Q x in diamonds may still go on to three no-trumps and rely on his partner for having more than six diamonds to the Knave or worse.

Then again, certain types of bidding seem to preclude the possibility of game.

South	North
1 ♦	1 ♥
1 NT	2 ♦

Both partners have bid weakly here, so the chance of their holding 26 points seems remote. However, if opener was just short of a jump two no-trump re-bid, he might now bid two no-trumps, hoping to find responder with a maximum holding for his bidding. (Note: One clear exception to this is where a player rescues his partner from a doubled contract. Here he may have almost no high-card values.) When responder makes a bid, partner should play him for holding the minimum strength required for that bid; if he bids a second time, that also shows some added values, if only distributional values.

Take the following hand:

♠ 5 3 ♥ K Q J 10 6 2 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ 5 2

A strict point-counter held this hand. His partner opened a club, he bid a heart, and his partner re-bid one no-trump. Responder decided he did not have enough for a second bid, for which he should have around 10 points. He had only 8—only 6 in high cards. So it was down two at one no-trump, whereas two hearts would have been a lay-down.

Now this, obviously, makes no sense. Responder had more to gain by trying to reach a playable contract than to lose by fooling his partner to the extent of 1 or 2 points. If partner bid two no-trumps, responder could still bid three hearts, and should partner (exceptionally) continue to three no-trumps, he would necessarily have the Ace of hearts and should have a play to make it.

The rule should be, therefore, that where partner is apparently in a bad contract, the requirements for a player's bid may be shaded by a couple of points in order to find a better spot.

III. Strong Responses

This category comprises: 1. Jump raises to three of partner's suit. 2. Jump take-outs to two or three no-trumps. 3. Forcing take-outs: bids of one trick more than necessary in a new suit. 4. Jumps to game in partner's suit: strong only distributionally.

Double Raise in Partner's Suit

This bid is forcing to game in a major suit, and is strongly encouraging, though not forcing, in a minor. The minimum trump holding for this bid is four to an honour (J x x x). However, the raise may be given, exceptionally, with four small, A K x, A Q x, or K Q x if no other satisfactory bid is available. The point requirement for this bid is 13–16 points of which a minimum of 10 points must be in high cards.

For example, partner opens one heart. You hold:

♠ 7 ♥ K Q 5 4 (6) ♦ A J 3 2 (6) ♣ 7 6 4 3 (1)

13 points. Bid three hearts.

♠ 8 ♥ K Q 7 4 (6) ♦ A K J 6 (9) ♣ 6 5 4 2 (1)
16 points. Bid three hearts.

Partner bids one spade. You hold:

♠ A 7 5 3 (5) ♥ A K 4 (7) ♦ K 3 2 (3) ♣ 6 5 4
15 points. Bid three spades.

♠ K 7 5 4 (5) ♥ A K 4 3 (7) ♦ Q 7 6 (2) ♣ 5 4
14 points. Bid three spades.

Jump Take-out to Two No-trumps

This bid is forcing to game. It requires a balanced distribution and 13–15 points in high cards.

For example, partner bids one spade. You hold:

♠ 7 6 ♥ K Q 4 (5) ♦ A 5 4 3 (4) ♣ K J 7 2 (4)
13 points. Bid two no-trumps.

♠ K 7 5 (3) ♥ A Q 4 (6) ♦ 6 4 3 2 ♣ A Q 5 (6)
15 points. Bid two no-trumps.

Jump Take-out to Three No-trumps

This bid requires a count of 16–18, with a stopper in all unbid suits. The distribution should be either 4–3–3–3, or 4–4–3–2, with the doubleton in partner's suit. It is a mild slam try, since a bid of *two* no-trumps would obviously get the partnership to game.

For example, partner bids one spade. You hold:

♠ Q 5 4 (2) ♥ A Q 3 (6) ♦ K J 7 2 (4) ♣ A J 4 (5)
17 points. Bid three no-trumps.

If the hand contains more than 18 points, it is too big for a three no-trump take-out, and a game-forcing take-out should be employed.

Border-line Zones

The reader should note that throughout suit bidding there is an overlap of bidding situations. For example, 10 points can be considered either in the minimum zone for responses, or in the constructive zone. Thirteen points may be in the zone of game bids, or of game encouragement. These overlaps are the border-line, twilight zones, and a player must use his judgment as to which course of action is best with the particular hand he holds, and with the partner he has. He should decide whether his hand seems to be a favourable one or not for the number of points he holds. (See Chapter IV.) However, whatever action he decides upon, he cannot be far off the target, and should rarely, if ever, incur any disasters if he should make a wrong decision.

The Game-forcing Take-out

This is a response of one trick more than necessary in a new suit. The point-count required is a minimum of 18 points. Where the count is only 18–19, it indicates either good support for partner's suit or an independent suit of one's own. This bid is forcing to game and strongly suggests a slam.

For example, partner bid one heart. You hold:

♠ A K 7 5 2[1] ♥ K 5 4 ♦ A Q 7 4 ♣ 2

19 points in support of hearts. (16 plus 2 plus 1). Bid two spades.

♠ — ♥ Q 5 4 3 ♦ A K 7 5 4 3 ♣ K Q 6

19 points (14 plus 4 plus 1) in support of hearts. Bid three diamonds.

[1] For extremely precise valuation on raises, add an additional point for 5-card or longer side suits headed by at least seven points or K Q J.

♠ A K J 6 5 3 ♥ 4 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ A 7 5

19 points (17 plus 2). Bid two spades.

♠ A 3 ♥ 7 5 ♦ A K Q J 4 ♣ K 5 4 2

20 points (18 plus 2). Bid three diamonds. Note 1 additional point granted for 100 honours.

The Triple Raise in a Major

This is a pre-emptive raise showing very strong trump support, but not more than 8 points in high cards, and usually a freakish distribution. Hands distributed 5–3–3–2 do not qualify, as they have too many losers. For example, partner bids one heart. You hold:

♠ 5 4 ♥ Q 7 5 3 2 ♦ A J 6 4 3 ♣ 5

11 points (7 plus 4) in support of hearts. Bid four hearts.

♠ — ♥ Q 7 6 5 3 2 ♦ K 6 5 4 3 ♣ 5 4

11 points (5 plus 6) in support of hearts. Bid four hearts.

Responding After Having Passed

The fact that a player has previously passed makes a great difference in his responses. He should remember that his responses are no longer forcing. Consequently, he can no longer employ a minimum bid in a new suit as an encouraging bid unless he is quite willing to play the hand in that contract. A double raise in a major suit, likewise, is no longer forcing; consequently, if he wishes to be sure of getting to game, he must jump to four. The triple raise therefore becomes stronger than the double raise and is no longer pre-emptive—which would be pointless anyway, as both opponents have already passed. As he has denied opening-bid values, he may give a double raise on only

12 points, and since a raise is likely to be more helpful to partner than a non-forcing bid in a new suit, a single raise may show as much as 11 points after passing.

Similarly, a jump response of two no-trumps may now be made on 11 or 12 points, as this bid may be passed by partner.

For example, after your original pass, partner bids one heart. You hold:

♠ 5 ♥ 6 4 3 2 ♦ Q 7 3 ♣ A K 5 4 3

13 points. (9 plus 3 plus 1). One point is granted in raise for the five-card side suit headed by A K. Bid three hearts—not two clubs, which partner is more likely to pass.

♠ 7 6 ♥ Q J 5 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ A Q 10 5 4

10 points (9 plus 1). Bid two hearts. This is a more constructive bid than two clubs.

♠ 8 ♥ K 7 6 5 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A Q 7 6 4

13 points (9 plus 4). Bid four hearts.

♠ K 5 4 ♥ 6 3 ♦ A J 7 6 ♣ K J 5 3

12 points. Bid two no-trumps, not two clubs or two diamonds. Two clubs or two diamonds is more likely to be passed, and you may go down because of three card support. The two no-trump bid in this sequence is not forcing to game, but is highly invitational.[1]

A minimum response at the two-level also may be made on slightly shaded values, as partner need not respond to this bid.

A jump bid in a new suit is a specialized bid telling partner that the responder expects to score a game despite his initial pass if partner has the minimum values for a bid. Opener may pass only if he shaded the requirements for a bid.

[1] If the double-raise of a major suit, or the response of two no-trumps, is invariably played as a limit-bid—as is the case in certain British systems—the strength for these bids is that used in the Culbertson System after passing.

There is no point in making a jump bid merely because you have passed a good hand—if a free re-bid by partner is needed to go game, the jump serves no useful purpose, and merely crowds the bidding. A correct jump bid (take-out) is likely to show a big fit with partner, a set-up minor suit suggesting three no-trumps, or a freak hand with a very strong suit.

For example, partner bids one heart. You hold:

♠ 7 4 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ A K Q 10 6 2 ♣ 6 5

12 points. Bid three diamonds hoping for 3 no-trumps.

♠ 8 ♥ Q 7 6 4 ♦ A K 7 5 4 3 2 ♣ 6

13 points. Hand valued in support of hearts. Bid three diamonds.

Partner bids one spade. You hold:

♠ K 6 ♥ Q J 10 9 5 4 3 ♦ A 2 ♣ 6 4

13 points. Bid three hearts.

Free Bids

This section will cover the proper procedure when your right-hand opponent has entered the bidding. If your holding justifies a strong response, you should bid as far as possible, just as if he had not entered the bidding: that is, you give a double raise, bid two or three no-trumps, or force in a new suit. Where your hand falls into the minimum type of responses, however, your bidding should be somewhat modified.

The weakest permissible responses are made for the purpose of keeping the bidding open in case your partner has a big hand. As your opponent has kept the bidding open, your partner will have an opportunity to indicate great strength, should he have it, without any assistance from you. Consequently with weak hands, counting 6 or 7

points, you should always pass, and plan to show such values later if partner is able to re-bid. Thus, all bids over opponents' bids—that is, free bids—show fairly good hands, a minimum of about 9 points.

Free Bids in No-trumps

The bid of one no-trump over an opponent's overcall shows a balanced distribution, a stopper in opponent's suit, and 9–12 points.

For example, one diamond by partner, one spade by opponent. You hold:

♠ K 10 7 (3) ♥ 6 5 3 2 ♦ Q 4 3 (2) ♣ A 6 4 (4)
9 points. Bid one no-trump.

♠ Q J 7 (3) ♥ A 6 5 3 (4) ♦ K 6 3 (3) ♣ Q 6 2 (2)
12 points. Bid one no-trump.

The bid of two no-trumps over an opponent's one-level overcall should show 13 points with two stoppers in opponent's suit, or 14 points with one stopper.

To bid two no-trumps over opponent's two-level overcall requires 11 points with two stoppers in opponent's suit, or 12 points with one stopper.

Free Raises

A free raise of partner's suit shows from 8 to 11 points in support of his suit.

For example, one heart by partner, two diamonds by opponent. You hold:

♠ 7 6 ♥ Q 5 4 3 ♦ 10 6 2 ♣ A 7 6 5
8 points (6 plus 2). Bid two hearts.

♠ 7 4 ♥ Q 6 5 3 ♦ A 4 2 ♣ K 6 4 3
11 points (9 plus 2). Bid two hearts.

Free Bids in a New Suit

A free bid at the one-level requires a minimum count of 9 points.

For example, one diamond by partner, one heart by opponent. You hold:

♠ K Q 7 4 (5) ♥ 6 3 ♦ 8 6 3 ♣ A 5 4 2 (5)

10 points. Bid one spade.

♠ A J 7 6 4 (6) ♥ 5 3 ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ K 7 2 (3)

9 points. Bid one spade.

The requirement for a bid at the two-level is 10 points, except where your suit is higher ranking than partner's, in which case about 12 is needed. This is because partner may be forced to re-bid at the three-level.

For example, one diamond by partner, one spade by opponent. You hold:

♠ 7 5 4 ♥ K 6 2 (3) ♦ 8 6 ♣ A Q 5 4 2 (7)

10 points. Bid two clubs. Partner, having opened with a diamond, must be prepared to bid over two clubs. Opponent's overcall has not raised the level of bidding.

One diamond by partner, two clubs by opponent. You hold:

♠ A Q 7 6 3 (7) ♥ K 5 4 (3) ♦ 3 2 ♣ 6 5 4

10 points. This is too weak for a bid of two spades, as it may force partner to the three-level. Partner was prepared to bid one no-trump or two diamonds, probably, over one spade, but he may not be at all anxious to bid three diamonds or two no-trumps. Substitute the Queen of diamonds for a small diamond, and the hand (12 points) would qualify as a two-spade bid.

Though, normally, a player should have 9 points for a free bid, this need not be rigidly adhered to. The point-count alone is not the only consideration. (See Chapter IV.) With unusually strong suits, 8 points will suffice.

For example, partner bids one diamond, opponent one heart. You hold:

♠ A Q 7 6 5 3 (8) ♥ 4 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ 6 5 2

8 points. Bid one spade.

Partner bids one diamond, opponent one spade. You hold:

♠ 7 6 ♥ 5 4 3 ♦ 6 3 2 ♣ A K J 10 5 (9)

9 points. Bid two clubs.

Responding Over an Opposing Double

When an opponent doubles the opening bid for a take-out, the bidding of opener's partner must be considerably altered:

1. With a good hand, containing well-distributed strength, redouble. The redouble does not necessarily show any support for partner and may indicate a desire to double the enemy. About 10 points in high cards are required, but with strong support for partner you may shade it to 8.

2. With a good hand, but with the strength largely concentrated in one suit, make a one-round force by jumping one level in your own suit.

For example, one spade by partner, double by next opponent. You hold:

♠ Q 7 6 5 2 ♥ A Q 4 3 ♦ 6 ♣ 7 6 5

12 points. (8 plus 4) in support of spades. Redouble.

♠ 8 ♥ A J 7 6 ♦ K 5 4 2 ♣ K 6 5 2

11 points in high cards. Redouble.

♠ 8 ♥ K 7 5 ♦ A K J 10 4 2 ♣ 7 6 4

14 points. Bid 3 diamonds.

With a fair hand (9–10 points), pass and await developments, planning to make a constructive bid on the next round.

For example, one heart by partner, double by opponent. You hold:

♠ K 6 ♥ Q 7 5 ♦ A 4 3 2 ♣ 6 4 3 2

10 points (9 plus 1) in support of hearts. Opponents cannot go to game. Raise hearts on the next round.

With weak or mediocre hands, the procedure is as follows:

With four trumps and about 5–7 points, raise partner's suit once. With five trumps or four strong trumps, and 8–10 points, mostly distributional, give a double raise over the opposing double. Both of these bids indicate a hand weak in high cards.

For example, one spade by your partner, double by opponent. You hold:

♠ J 7 6 5 ♥ J 4 3 ♦ K 6 4 2 ♣ 7 2

7 points (5 plus 2). Bid two spades.

♠ Q 7 6 5 2 ♥ 4 ♦ Q 6 5 4 3 ♣ 7 2

8 points (4 plus 4). Bid three spades.

A bid in a new suit over the double shows either a mediocre hand (maximum 8 or 9 points) or a very weak hand and inability to play at a doubled contract in partner's suit.

For example, one heart by partner, double by opponent. You hold:

♠ A 10 7 6 4 (5) ♥ 3 2 ♦ K 5 4 (3) ♣ 7 5 4

8 points. Bid one spade.

♠ Q 9 7 5 4 3 (4) ♥ 8 ♦ 6 5 2 ♣ 5 4 2

4 points. Bid one spade.

A bid over the double waves a red flag at partner so far as re-bidding his own suit is concerned. For example, in the same bidding—one heart by partner, double by opponent—if you hold:

♠ Q 9 7 6 5 3 (4) ♥ 5 4 3 ♦ 8 ♣ 7 6 2

Pass. You have three hearts and therefore need not fear a contract of one heart doubled.

With any other type of weak hand, pass.

SUMMARY

Responding to Opening Suit-bids of One

With 0–4 points, pass.

With 5 points, respond only if you can do so with a bid of one in a suit (or raise with five trumps).

With 6–10 points, your hand is in the minimum zone, which warrants only one bid toward game. With adequate support for partner's suit, raise his suit. Lacking adequate support, bid one-over-one if possible, or two-over-one with at least 10 points, and those concentrated mainly in your suit. In all other cases bid one no-trump. (Note: 'Adequate trump support' for partner's minor suit implies a four-card holding, whereas a major suit may be raised on three to an honour.)

With 11 points or more, your first response must not be one no-trump or a single raise of partner's suit.

With 11–13 points, you have a fair hand—enough for two encouraging bids. Respond in a new suit, and on the next round make a further encouraging bid; for example, bid two no-trumps over partner's re-bid of one no-trump, bid a new suit, or raise partner's suit.

RESPONSES TO SUIT-BIDS OF ONE

With 13–17 points, you have a game hand, as the 26 points for game are assured. Make a game-forcing bid, or a one-round force followed by an eventual game bid. Bid two no-trumps with 13–15 points or three no-trumps with 16–18 points. Give partner a double raise with 13–16 points. Bid a new suit either at the one-level or two-level, followed by a bid to game. If partner shows any further signs of life, make a slam try with 16–17 points.

With 18 points and upwards, you are in the slam zone. 18 points brings the partnership to 31 points at least, only 2 points away from the 33-point goal. Make a game-forcing bid, a one-trick jump in a new suit. This informs partner that moderate added values will produce a slam. With 21 points and upwards, a slam contract should ordinarily be insisted upon.

CHAPTER X

Two-bids and Responses

In my 1949 *Contract Bridge Complete*, page 135, I write: 'An opening two-bid should seldom be even considered unless the hand . . . is not more than one trick short of a certain game . . .'

But the 'one trick short of game' formula is too general. Accordingly, in the Culbertson honour-trick method of valuation this problem was definitely solved by a neat compact rule: You must have *more honour-tricks than losers.* The rule had a remarkable success, for it gave to bridge players the one thing they prize above all—security in precision. Now, if we had some such rule for two-bids in point-count valuation this vexing and important problem would be solved.

In the Culbertson point-count bidding method such a rule has been devised. Here is how it works:

Count your points precisely as for other suits bids, except for the trump suit. You are to count only the following:

1. *High-card Points* (4–3–2–1, according to table for no-trump bids).
2. *Trump Length:* 2 points for each trump *over* 5.
3. *Side-suit Length:* 1 point for each card *over* 3.

Take an extra point for 100 honours.

Exception. The only hand pattern that requires more than 22 points is 4–4–4–1. Here, because of the unfavourable distribution, the requirement is raised to about 26 points.

Examples:

	Honour Points		Length Points
1. ♠ A K 10 9 7 6 4 3	7		6
♥ A Q	6		
♦ K x x	3		
♣ —			
	—		—
	16	+	6 = 22 points

22 points. You have a forcing two-bid.

	Honour Points		Length Points
2. ♠ A Q 5 4 2	6		
♥ A K 7	7		
♦ A K 5	7		
♣ 6 3			
	—		—
	20	+	0 = 20 points

20 points. Far short for a forcing two-bid. Notice now the enormous difference (and the precision of the Rule of 22) when a Knave-ten is substituted for two low spades.

	Honour Points		Length Points
3. ♠ A Q J 10 5	8		
♥ A K 7	7		
♦ A K 5	7		
♣ 6 3			
	—		—
	22	+	0 = 22 points

22 points. A sound forcing two-bid. 1 extra point is taken for the 100 honours.

Responses to Two-Bids

On the basis of the Rule of 22 there are two kinds of responses: negative with two no-trumps; positive with 7 points or more, shaded down to 6 points with a suit headed by Ace–Queen.

After a positive response by partner, re-value your hand by applying the Rule of Three and Four.

The recommended responses to two-bids are natural responses—except for the negative response of two no-trumps. This latter bid is used to indicate a hand with fewer than 7 points. With no points at all the responder must, of course, still bid two no-trumps, since the bidding must be kept open until game is reached.

In order to make a 'positive' (encouraging) response, a player should hold, as a rule, a minimum of 7 points in high cards including at least one Ace or one King. However, this may be shaded to 6 points where a suit headed by Ace–Queen is held, or even to 5 points with Ace–Knave to five or more where the suit can be shown at the two-level. If partner opens two hearts, bid two spades holding:

♠ A J 6 4 3 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ 7 5 4

Responses may be of three types:

1. A raise of partner's suit. This is one of the most helpful responses to partner. Seven points including one Ace or one King are required, with adequate support for partner's suit. As the bid is forcing, there is no upper limit of values. The Raise Rule applies to two-bids.

For example, partner bids two hearts. You hold:

♠ 7 2 ♥ Q 6 5 3 ♦ K J 7 2 ♣ 5 4 3

8 points (6 plus 2). Bid three hearts.

♠ 7 6 ♥ Q 5 4 3 ♦ Q 7 6 5 ♣ Q 4 3

8 points (6 plus 2). Bid two no-trumps. The hand has no Ace or King.[1]

♠ 8 ♥ K 7 6 5 ♦ A 4 2 ♣ Q 6 5 4 3

12 points (9 plus 3). Bid three hearts.

2. A jump in no-trumps. The jump to three no-trumps shows a count of 7–9 points in high cards, but no biddable suit or raise for partner.

For example, partner bids two hearts. You hold:

♠ K 7 5 (3) ♥ 6 4 ♦ 7 6 5 3 ♣ A 6 5 2 (4)

7 points. Bid three no-trumps.

♠ A 7 4 (4) ♥ J 6 (1) ♦ K J 3 (4) ♣ 7 6 5 3 2

9 points. Bid three no-trumps.

3. A take-out in a new suit. This bid indicates a biddable suit and usually 7 points including an Ace or King. Where the hand includes support for partner, the suit should be shown first and the raise given later.

For example, partner bids two diamonds. You hold:

♠ Q J 7 5 2 (4) ♥ 4 3 ♦ 6 5 ♣ K 4 3 2 (4)

8 points. Bid two spades.

♠ A K Q 7 6 (11) ♥ 5 3 ♦ K 4 3 2 (4) ♣ 6 5

15 points (12 plus 2 raise points plus 1 point for five-card side

[1] In the Culbertson System (see my new book *Contract Bridge Complete*) a special convention is provided under which responder may *double-raise* an opening two-bid (e.g., bid four hearts in response to partner's two-heart opening) when holding: five trumps, or four trumps to the Queen, if he holds no first-, or no second-round control: i.e., no Ace, King, or singleton.

To quote:

'This is a neat little inference enabling the opener to stop dead in his tracks short of a dangerous slam; or, if strong enough to bid a slam without assistance, to decide whether to bid six or seven.

'*Caution:* Do not use this weak double-raise unless you are *sure* partner will not take it as a sign of strength.'

suit headed by A K Q). Valued in support of diamonds. Bid two spades.

♠ A Q 7 6 (6) ♥ J 5 4 3 (1) ♦ 3 2 ♣ 7 6 4

7 points. Bid two spades.

♠ 7 6 4 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ 4 3 ♣ A Q 6 5 3 (7)

7 points. Bid three clubs.

Note: If your suit out-ranks partner's so that it can be bid without increasing the level, you may shade the requirements down to 6 or even 5 points.[1] Thus, if partner bids two diamonds, for example, it is proper to respond with two spades, holding:

♠ A 7 5 4 3 ♥ 5 3 ♦ 8 5 ♣ 7 5 3 2

After the playing suit has been determined, Aces may then be shown by cue-bids, and once the Ace has been shown, a further bid in the suit shows the King.

If you wish to play 'Ace Showing,' the method is as follows:

Ace Showing

A convention which has gained considerable popularity lately is based on showing Aces immediately over two-bids, instead of showing strength and distribution. In certain exceptional hands this works remarkably well, but it is usually much more important to determine the strength and distribution before locating specific Aces. The Asking Bid is infinitely preferable.

With one Ace, including the Ace of trumps, bid that suit. With two Aces, bid four no-trumps. With distributed strength without an Ace, bid three no-trumps.

On all other hands, the first response must be two no-trumps, and the strength or weakness of the hand is clarified on later rounds of bidding.

[1] Especially if your high-card count consists of an Ace or two Kings.

The Limit Forcing Two-Bid

(An important exception to Forcing Two)

The opening suit two-bid is *not forcing to game* provided these two conditions exist:

1. The response has been *two no-trumps*, and
2. The opening bidder rebids the original suit at the lowest level (usually three).

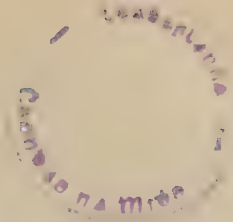
Examples:

South	West	North	East
2♠ (*forcing*)	Pass	2 no-trumps	Pass
3♠ (*not forcing*),			

but

2♠ (*forcing*)	Pass	2 no-trumps	Pass
3♦ (*forcing to game*)			

Requirements: 6-card or longer trump suit with six sure winners and 18 high-card points in the hand.



CHAPTER XI

Opening Pre-emptive Bids

All opening suit-bids of three or four, and of five in a minor, are pre-emptive or shut-out bids. Point-count is not useful in these hands, the main requirement being that a pre-empt should contain *winners* (playing tricks) in high and low cards. It should not contain more than 10 points in high cards. (Exception: in third or fourth position a hand strong in high cards may be opened four hearts or four spades, so long as it appears unlikely that a slam will be missed.)

To qualify as a pre-emptive bid, a hand should have a strong six- or seven-card (or longer) suit, and should produce enough sure winners to be within two tricks of the bid if vulnerable, and within three tricks if not vulnerable (Rule of Two and Three).

The count of winners is fully explained in the *Gold Book*, page 32; but the following will give you an approximate count: Concede a lost trick to the opponents for each Ace, King or Queen they hold in your trump suit, or in any four-card suit (a pre-emptive bid should not be made if you have a side suit longer than four cards). But you never expect to lose more than two tricks in an eight-card suit, so the suit A–K–x–x–x–x–x–x is counted as eight winners.

This can *very roughly* be translated into point-count valuation. An opening three-bid in a six- or seven-card suit

requires about 14–15 points if vulnerable, about 12–13 points if not vulnerable. In arriving at your points on a seven- or eight-card suit, you simply count your hand as if your partner supported your suit. All you have to do is to total your high-card count, plus 2 points for each card over four in the trump suit. Do not forget to add 1 point if you have 100 honours, as explained in Chapter IV.

An opening four-bid requires 2 points more than a three-bid in each case.

Opening Three-Bids

The opening bid of three in a suit, especially in a minor suit, is not a very effective shut-out because it is not a high enough bid. Care must be taken not to shut-out partner if it is he, instead of the opponents, who has the game-going cards.

The danger is not very great when the three-bid is made in a major suit. If partner is strong, a contract of four in the major will likely offer as good a play for game as would three no-trumps. A minor suit three-bid, however, may confront partner with a sheer guess; and he will have no time to explore the possibilities of different contracts, and still stay below the three no-trump level.

The requirements for an opening suit three-bid are:

A long, strong trump suit of at least six and usually seven cards; and

At least seven winners if vulnerable, and at least six winners if not vulnerable.

Whereas any sort of long trump suit will do for a major suit three-bid (for example, a seven-card suit like Q 10 9 8 6 5 4), a minor suit three-bid should not be made

without two of the three top cards in the trump suit. For example, K Q x x x x x.

Then if partner has one of the three top honours in the minor suit, he can count on running the entire suit, six or seven winners, at no-trump.

Examples of opening three-bids:

If vulnerable:

♠ 6 ♥ K Q J 8 7 4 3 ♦ J 10 9 5 ♣ 6 Three hearts
♠ Q J 9 7 6 4 3 ♥ 5 2 ♦ K Q J ♣ 7 Three spades
♠ 6 ♥ 5 4 ♦ K Q J 8 6 3 ♣ Q J 10 4 Three diamonds

If not vulnerable:

♠ 10 9 6 ♥ 2 ♦ K 6 ♣ K Q 10 8 6 5 2 Three clubs
♠ J 9 8 6 5 4 3 2 ♥ 9 3 ♦ — ♣ Q 8 3 Three spades

When you are third hand, even a minor-suit three-bid may be made on a suit lacking the top cards. Partner, having passed, will not be strong enough to bid three no-trumps; and the three-bid may be valuable in keeping the opponents out of their best spot. Fourth-in-hand, a three-bid is obviously futile.

Responses to Opening Three-Bids

An opening three-bid shows a weak hand *and is usually passed by partner*. It does not *ask* the responder to pass; the three-bidder, being human, hopes his partner will be strong enough to bid. But the responder seldom holds either the concentration of honour-tricks, or the perfect fit, that would warrant his bidding over such weakness as the opening three-bid announces.

A raise of a three-bid is based on the Rule of Two and Three. The opener has depended on his partner to supply

two winners if vulnerable and three if not vulnerable. The responder counts his supporting winners and may raise once for every winner *over two*, if vulnerable, and for every winner *over three*, if not vulnerable.

In counting winners, the responder must limit himself to defensive tricks (see page 92) and ruffing tricks. (Again, the count of supporting winners may be found in the *Gold Book*, but as a rule of thumb you may count ruffing winners as follows: With a singleton, count one ruffing winner for each trump over *two*; with a void, count one ruffing winner for each trump over *one*.) Count no side lengths; you cannot expect to establish a side suit in time to use it. And seldom does a hand warrant raising a three-bid unless it includes at least one Ace and preferably two.

As for opening pre-emptive bids, you can very roughly use the point-count for raises of three-bids. You need 10 or more points to raise a major suit three-bid to four, but in arriving at these points count only your trump suit plus the high cards in defensive honour-tricks in side suits.

♠ Q J 6 3 ♥ 10 7 6 5 ♦ 4 ♣ K Q 8 2

Partner bids three hearts, not vulnerable. In *winners*, you can count only three: one for the defensive trick in clubs, and two ruffing tricks because you have a singleton with four trumps. If partner is not vulnerable, his six tricks plus your three will not reach to game. If partner is vulnerable he should have seven tricks, which with your three would produce game; but you have no Ace and you cannot count on our partner for an Ace, when he makes a pre-emptive bid, so the opponents may win four tricks with Aces. Pass, because you have an Aceless hand.

The easiest way to measure your possible winners would be to visualize your partner's suit pattern. This is how I should picture my partner's hand: one spade, because he may be pre-empting, on the express account of his lack in the other major suit; seven hearts, three diamonds and two clubs. Thus the Queen Knave of spades is of doubtful value. It appears that you can ruff two

diamonds and you can count on one trick with the King Queen in the Club suit. Your partner is counting on you for three tricks (not vulnerable) to make his 3-heart bid. In this situation I should pass. On the other hand, if my partner made a three-heart bid (vulnerable) I should now bid 4 hearts, because he is only counting on me for two tricks to make his bid; and it appears that my hand offers three tricks.

Trump support is not so important when partner opens with a three-bid. Two small trumps are ample. A single Knave or Queen is as good as two trumps. Any of these holdings justifies a raise if there are enough winners in the hand. The following hands are good raises:

Raise three spades to four with:

♠ 6 3 ♥ A K 6 ♦ 7 6 5 3 ♣ A J 10 9

Raise a three-heart bid to four with:

♠ Q 8 6 5 ♥ 10 3 ♦ 5 ♣ A K Q 6 5 2

There is no reason to show the clubs on such a hand.

Three no-trumps is bid over partner's minor suit three-bid with $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ defensive tricks, including the Ace, King or Queen of partner's suit. Translating this into the point-count, you need the Ace, King or Queen of partner's suit and 9 points outside, with a stopper or near stopper (such as 10–x–x–x or J–x–x) in each of the unbid suits. Three no-trumps are seldom bid over a major suit three-bid.

Aces are important to the three no-trump take-out, as they are to the raise of a three-bid. The following 10-count is an excellent three no-trump bid when partner has opened with three diamonds:

♠ 10 7 6 3 ♥ A 6 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ A 9 5 3

If partner has seven diamonds to the A Q, the game can be run off except in the unlikely event that the defenders can start off

with five spade tricks. But the following 12-point hand is a better pass:

♠ Q 8 3 ♥ K Q 5 4 ♦ K 5 ♣ Q 7 6 2

Even if the suit opened can be controlled, and seven diamonds run, the defenders will probably have the next five tricks in top cards. (And it may be only six diamonds.)

When the responder does bid three no-trumps over a major suit three-bid, it is fairly obvious that he should. He will have 16 to 18 points, or he will have a long suit of his own, like this:

♠ 3 ♥ Q 10 9 5 ♦ A 10 ♣ A K Q J 8 5

Bid three no-trumps over partner's three spades, for it is more likely that you will win nine tricks at no-trumps than ten tricks at spades, where there may be two spade and two heart tricks to lose.

A suit take-out of a three-bid should be made only in a suit that is close to self-sufficient itself, and a strong hand with at least 2½ defensive tricks. There is little reason to bid a suit over a major suit three-bid; there is much reason to bid a strong major over a minor suit three-bid.

With the following hand, raise three spades to four, but bid three hearts over three diamonds:

♠ 7 5 ♥ A K 10 9 6 3 ♦ 5 ♣ K J 7 6

Pass the following hand, whatever partner's three-bid:

♠ 7 5 ♥ A K 10 9 6 3 ♦ 5 2 ♣ Q 6 3

Game is unlikely, and it is probable that partner's suit is stronger than the hearts.

Opening Four-Bids

An opening four-bid is the same in a major or minor suit, with one exception. The major suit four-bid may (but need not) have a little more in high cards.

A four-bid requires eight winners if vulnerable. Under the Rule of Two and Three, seven winners are enough if not vulnerable, but even when you are not vulnerable it is well to have eight winners, or at least a chance for eight winners ($7\frac{1}{2}$ winners, or an extra Queen or J–10).

The trump suit for a four-bid is hardly ever of less than seven-card length.

Here are two typical four-bids, respectively vulnerable and non-vulnerable:

♠ 5 ♥ K J 10 9 7 6 5 3 ♦ Q J 10 3 ♣ —

(Bid four hearts, vulnerable or not.)

♠ 5 ♥ K J 10 9 7 6 5 3 ♦ Q J 7 ♣ 6

(Bid four hearts not vulnerable; three hearts if vulnerable.)

The second of the two hands may lose six tricks, and go down three at four hearts; but there is a possible eighth winner (since the heart suit may develop seven tricks, losing only to the Ace).

With a solid suit, the major-suit four-bid is proper, the minor suit four-bid should be avoided. That ready-made suit may mean seven or eight tricks at no-trumps, and it is unwise to start off at the four-level, committing the side to an eleven-trick game contract or no game contract at all.

Bid four hearts, vulnerable, or not, with:

♠ 2 ♥ A K Q J 8 7 5 3 ♦ 6 5 ♣ 9 3

but pass with:

♠ 8 7 ♥ 10 9 3 ♦ A K Q J 8 7 5 ♣ 10

♠ — ♥ 7 ♦ K J 10 9 7 6 5 3 ♣ K J 10 6

(Bid four diamonds, vulnerable or not.)

♠ Q 10 9 8 6 5 4 2 ♥ 7 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ 9

(Bid four spades not vulnerable; three spades or pass if vulnerable.)

♠ 5 ♥ 6 5 ♦ K Q 10 9 8 6 5 4 2 ♣ 10

(Bid four diamonds, vulnerable or not.)

Responses to Four-Bids

Partner must be very cautious about raising an opening four-bid past game. He may raise a minor suit four-bid to game with three honour- or ruffing-winners, including two Aces, but should not raise any four-bid to six unless he has six quick winners when not vulnerable or five quick winners when vulnerable, including *three Aces*. He need have only two Aces if he has the King or Queen of the trump suit and a guarded King or a singleton in the fourth suit.

A conventional four no-trump bid should always be preferred to a mere raise of partner's major suit to five, and is usually better than a jump to six.

Partner opens with four hearts. Holding:

♠ K Q J ♥ 6 5 ♦ A K Q 6 ♣ K Q 10 4

Pass. Partner should not be expected to hold two Aces.

♠ A 6 4 3 ♥ Q 5 ♦ A K Q 8 5 2 ♣ 5

Bid four no-trumps (conventional).[1] If partner denies an Ace, stop at five hearts.

♠ K Q 7 6 ♥ Q 8 5 4 ♦ A K J 10 3 ♣ —

Bid six hearts. Freak hands justify exceptional treatment. You have two first-round, and one second-round, controls.

♠ A K 10 5 ♥ K J ♦ A Q J 8 5 ♣ A 5

Bid four no-trumps, and go to seven if partner shows the ♥ A.

Minor-Suit Five-Bids

An opening bid of five in a minor suit is, like the four-bid, a pure shut-out bid. Following the Rule of Two and Three, it requires nine winners if vulnerable, and *about nine* winners if not vulnerable.

An opening five-bid in a major suit is not a shut-out bid but a slam try.

[1] Blackwood is assumed.

CHAPTER XII

Re-bids by Opener

The main objective toward which contract bidding is directed is game (or equivalent penalties). As long as either partner feels game may be possible, he continues the bidding—even at some risk of going down.

Generally speaking, 26 points are required to provide a better-than-even play for game in no-trumps or a major suit. However, 25 points will produce, on an average, a 37–40 per cent play for game, so that it is not disadvantageous here to get to game. When both sides are vulnerable, game should be bid with 25 points with a strong trump suit, so that a double is unlikely. The rather unusual minor suit game requires 29 points.

Of course, this does not mean that every time the partnership has 26 points a game should be bid. In addition to the 26 points, a satisfactory, playable contract must be found. For a satisfactory play in a major, at least eight trumps in the two hands are normally required, as well as some considerable strength in honours in the suit. Occasionally, with solid holdings, a good major game may be reached with only seven trumps, but this is an unusual case. If there is no satisfactory major suit contract, no-trumps will probably have to be the alternative. If no-trumps appears unplayable due to some weak suit, a part-score contract will have to be

accepted, perhaps in a minor, despite the 26 points. Most of the time, however, it will be possible to play for game either at no-trumps or a major. When you hold a singleton or two small in partner's suit, and he does not raise your suit or bid no-trumps, a misfit is a probability, and the hand must be soft-pedalled even though your partner opened and you have 13 points.

For example, one spade by opener, two hearts by responder, two spades by opener. You, responder, hold:

♠ 8 ♥ A Q 7 5 3 (6) ♦ K J 6 (4) ♣ K 4 3 2 (3)

13 points, at no-trumps. Bid only two no-trumps.

To determine whether game should be bid, add your points to the points shown by partner. If you count to 26, and also can play at no-trumps or a major suit, either bid game or make a bid your partner cannot pass.

A good play for a slam requires 33 or 34 points, although 32 points may sometimes suffice if just the right cards are held. At no-trumps, slams can be bid accurately on point-count alone. At suit-bids, point-count is not the only consideration. Controls, strength of trump suit, possible duplication of values, must also be considered. However, it can be said that with 33 points a good play for slam is probable, and serious consideration should be given to a slam contract. With 37–38 points, a grand slam is a probability if all four first-round controls are held.

In some hands a stage may be reached in the bidding where the player is able to count his *losers* and can, therefore, tell what the correct final contract should be. At this juncture the counting of points (or, for that matter, of honour-tricks) should be abandoned, since the correct final contract is already known. Obviously this is much the

simplest method where it can be applied. The slam hands on pages 140–41 are examples. Not infrequently it can be determined that the hand has only one loser in view of tricks partner has shown. Then there is no need for ascertaining whether the partnership has 33 points.

This two-bid is another example in point:

♠ A K Q 7 6 5 3 2 ♥ A J 10 9 ♦ 6 ♣ —

Here it can be seen that four-odd is virtually cold. Furthermore, there are three first- and one second-round controls. Although there are only three top tricks, the hand should obviously be opened as a two-bid—there is no need to count points.

Another example. North holds:

♠ A 4 ♥ K Q J 10 7 6 5 ♦ 3 ♣ K J 2

North bids one heart: partner responds with two clubs. North now knows that the hand should play at four hearts, so he bids it without bothering with further counts. The simplest way is the best. North should, of course, consider whether his hand is good enough for a slam if partner should insist on one; in this case, North has nothing to fear in that respect.

Minimum Re-bids: 12-15 Points

If partner makes a minimum limited response (one no-trump or a single raise), pass. If partner makes a forcing bid —either to game or for one round—give your prepared response. If, after a one-round force, partner makes a second constructive bid, either pass or bid game, depending on how favourably you view your hand; with 13 you ordinarily should pass; with 14 or 15, go on to game.

In several situations a re-valuation of your hand will be

necessary. If you intend to raise partner's suit, *re-value your hand as dummy.*

For example, opener, one heart; responder, one spade. You, opener, hold:

♠ Q 7 6 5 ♥ A Q 4 3 2 ♦ K J 6 ♣ 5

15 points in support of spades. Bid two spades. About 14 points, or one more than minimum, is needed to raise the responder's suit.

In re-valuing your hand for re-bidding, *count unsupported honours at face value if the contract is to be in no-trumps, or if the honour is in a suit bid by partner.*

For example, the bidding has been:

SOUTH	NORTH
1 ♠	2 ♣
2 ♠	3 ♠

South holds:

♠ A Q J 7 6 ♥ A J 4 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 8 6 2

14 points. (Gains 1 more point on re-valuation after partner supported your suit.)
Bid four spades; partner has shown 11–12 points.

The bidding has been:

SOUTH	NORTH
1 ♠	2 ♣
2 ♥	3 ♥

South holds:

♠ A K J 6 ♥ A 10 5 3 ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ 5 4

13 points. Pass. Hand remains at 13 points, and trump suit is very weak.

The bidding has been:

SOUTH	NORTH
1 ♣	1 ♠
1 NT	2 NT

South holds:

♠ Q 7 6 ♥ A 5 3 ♦ K 6 2 ♣ A J 4 3

13 points original valuation for suit-bid. However, valued for no-trumps, no deduction is made for unsupported Queen. So the hand is worth 14 points; bid three no-trumps. Partner has shown 11–12 points.

Same bidding, South holds:

♠ 7 6 2 ♥ A J 5 ♦ J 4 3 ♣ A K 6 2

13 points. Pass two no-trumps.

When partner responds with one in a suit, your re-bid should be one no-trump if your hand is balanced. Even with a five-card suit this usually gives a better picture than re-bidding the suit, and it is also safer.

For example, South opened one diamond; North responded one heart. South holds:

♠ A 7 (4) ♥ 6 5 ♦ A J 4 3 2 (6) ♣ K J 7 6 (5)

15 points. Bid one no-trump rather than two clubs or two diamonds.

Show a second suit if possible instead of re-bidding a five-card suit, unless the five-card suit is so strong as to be playable opposite a singleton.

For example, South opened one heart; North responded one spade. South holds:

♠ K 6 (3) ♥ A J 7 5 3 (6) ♦ A 10 5 4 (5) ♣ 3 2

14 points. Re-bid two diamonds. There is no protection in clubs, so one no-trump is undesirable. A minimum re-bid in a lower-

ranking suit is merely a distribution-showing bid and does not necessarily require extra points.

Same bidding: South holds:

♠ 6 5 ♥ A K J 10 4 (9) ♦ A 10 7 3 (5) ♣ 6 2

15 points. Re-bid two hearts. The hand will play better at hearts opposite a singleton than in diamonds opposite three small.

When partner gives a single raise, you should pass with hands in this range.

When partner bids one no-trump you should pass with a balanced hand. (4–3–3–3, 4–4–3–2, 5–3–3–2, 5–4–2–2.) With an unbalanced hand it will usually pay to make a re-bid purely for the purpose of getting into a better contract.

For example, South opened one heart; North responded one no-trump. South holds:

♠ 7 6 ♥ A Q 5 4 3 (7) ♦ K J 6 (4) ♣ Q J 5 (3)

14 points. Pass.

♠ 6 ♥ A Q 5 4 3 (7) ♦ K J 7 6 (5) ♣ Q J 5 (3)

15 points. Re-bid two diamonds.

Constructive Re-bids: 16-19 Points

If partner gives a single raise, re-bid to three of same suit with 17–18 points. Partner may have 8–10 points, in which case he will continue to game (in a major suit). If partner bids one no-trump, raise to two no-trumps with with 18–19 points. Partner with 7–9 points will continue to three.

For example, South, one spade; North, two spades. South holds:

♠ A J 7 6 2 ♥ K Q 5 4 ♦ A J 3 ♣ 6

Initial Valuation, 17 points. After partner supported your suit, the fifth spade gains one point on re-valuation equals 18 points. Bid three spades.

Same bidding, South holds:

♠ A J 6 4 (5) ♥ K Q 7 5 (6) ♦ A Q J 6 (8) ♣ 8

19 points. Bid three hearts.[1] It is always best over a single raise to re-bid a new suit or no-trumps with only a four-card suit. This warns partner of danger in the trump suit, at the same time informing him of a strong hand. This bid is a one-round force.

South, one spade; North, two spades; South holds:

♠ A K J 7 6 5 ♥ A J 4 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ 6

Initial Valuation, 17 points. Note that 3 points are taken for distribution. Unsupported Queen loses a point. Without re-valuation of the trump suit, the responder's possible minimum 6 points would make the count only 23. However, on re-valuation, the Queen of diamonds assumes its normal valuation of 2 points and the fifth and sixth spade are now valued at 2 points each, thus gaining 3 points. Your re-valuation count of 20 points, plus your partner's possible minimum of 6 points, calls for a four spade bid. Possible dummies might be:

♠ 10 7 6 4 ♥ K 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ Q 6 5 4 3

7 points (5 plus 2). Note: Hand is probably a lay-down even if the clubs are of no value.

♠ Q 7 6 2 ♥ 5 ♦ 5 4 3 2 ♣ Q 6 5 3

7 points (4 plus 3). This probably makes four spades.

♠ Q 7 6 2 ♥ 5 4 ♦ 6 5 4 ♣ K J 7 6

8 points (6 plus 2). Even with 8 points, it is possible that 4 spades will be down one. The clubs are useless and the Queen of spades is an unnecessary card. There is no way to avoid these results at times; this is an illustration of 'duplication of values'.

[1] Or three diamonds.

South, one spade; North, two spades; South holds:

♠ A J 7 6 2 (6) ♥ K Q 4 (5) ♦ A 5 3 (4) ♣ 8 2

15 points, plus 1 on re-valuation = 16 points. Pass.

South, one spade; North, one no-trump; South holds:

♠ A Q 7 5 (6) ♥ Q 4 (2) ♦ A J 3 2 (5) ♣ A J 6 (5)

18 points. (Note: Queen is counted at face value for no-trumps, but no credit is taken for distribution.) Bid two no-trumps. Without the Knave of clubs, pass.

A one-over-one re-bid is always advisable with this type of hand when it is available. Such a bid might have as much as 20 points as a maximum.

For example, South, one diamond; North, one heart. South holds:

♠ K Q 7 5 (6) ♥ A 3 (4) ♦ A K Q 6 2 (10) ♣ 5 4

20 points. Re-bid one spade. Partner should respond unless he bid on fewer than 7 points.

We have seen that a two-level re-bid in a suit lower-ranking than the player's first call may be made on a minimum hand. However, it is somewhat more encouraging than a re-bid in the same suit, if only because it opens up a second line of investigation. This type of re-bid may show as much as 18–19 points.

For example, South, one heart; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ 8 3 ♥ A K J 6 2 (9) ♦ 5 4 ♣ A K Q 7 (10)

19 points. Bid two clubs in preference to rebidding hearts. Partner is more likely to find a second bid over two clubs.

When partner makes a minimum take-out of two in a new suit, a re-bid of two no-trumps is a good encouraging

bid if your hand is suitable for no-trumps. This indicates from 16–17 points and may be shaded to 15 in high cards where there is no other re-bid.

For example, South, one spade; North, two clubs; South holds:

♠ A Q 7 2 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ K J 4 3 ♣ 8 6

16 points in high cards. Bid two no-trumps.

♠ A K 7 2 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ A J 5 3 ♣ 8 7

17 points. Bid two no-trumps. With 17[1] to 20 points, bid three no-trumps.

With 18–20 points you may reverse at the two-level. That is, bid a higher-ranking suit than the one you bid first, e.g., one club, one no-trump, *two spades*; or one club, one spade, *two hearts*. This sort of re-bid should be used only to picture the hand's distribution. A reverse should not be used merely to indicate a strong hand; there are plenty of other ways of doing this.

A reverse at the two-level, accordingly, is presumed to indicate that the first-bid suit is longer. Occasionally, a reverse may be made with suits of equal length for convenience, particularly after opening with one club, but this is not the usual procedure.

For example, South, one diamond; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ K 6 (3) ♥ A Q J 7 (8) ♦ A Q J 5 3 (8) ♣ 4 2

19 points. Bid two hearts.

With 18–20 points, bid a new suit at the three-level. This bid indicates that your first suit is at least a five-card suit.

[1] With 17 points, opener should use his judgment as to whether to bid two or three no-trumps. A good fit in partner's suit would incline him to the latter course.

South	North
1 ♠	2 ♥

South holds:

♠ A K 7 6 4 (8) ♥ 5 3 ♦ A K Q 4 (10) ♣ 8 6
18 points. Bid three diamonds.

♠ A K Q 7 5 (10) ♥ K 6 (3) ♦ 4 ♣ K Q 10 6 3 (7)
20 points. Bid three clubs. 20 points is the upper limit for this bid.

With good four-card support for partner's major (J x x x or better) and 17–19 points in support, give partner a double raise. This bid is a strong urge, though not a force.

For example, South, one diamond; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ K J 7 6 ♥ 5 ♦ A Q 4 3 2 ♣ A 6 3
17 points (re-valued after partner's one spade bid). Bid three spades.

Powerful Hands: 19 Points and Over

Opening bids of more than one (two-bids, two and three no-trump bids) in this range have already been considered. However, opening bids of one in a suit may go as high as 24 points, when unsuitable for a two no-trump bid or a suit two-bid.

With 18–20 points and a no-trump type of hand, make a jump two no-trump re-bid over partner's one-over-one response, and with 20–22 points, jump to three no-trumps.

For example, South, one heart; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ Q 6 (2) ♥ A K 5 4 (7) ♦ K Q 3 (5) ♣ A J 6 2 (5)
19 points. Bid two no-trumps.

With hands containing 20 or more points, and no five-card suit, you disregard the usual order of bidding in a suit. The following hand with fewer than 20 points would be opened with one heart. But, because it has at least 20 points, we open with one club. Responder may have a shaded response in the diamond suit of 5 points, such as A 7 6 5 2, which would constitute a pass if you opened with one heart.

♠ K 7 ♥ A K J 5 ♦ K Q 4 ♣ A J 3 2

21 points in high cards. Bid one club.

If partner bids one diamond or one spade, bid three no-trumps. If partner bids one heart, bid four hearts.

With 19–22 points, bid game in a major over partner's single raise.

For example, South, one spade; North, two spades. South holds:

♠ A J 7 5 4 (6) ♥ K Q 6 3 (6) ♦ A K 7 (7) ♣ 5

19 points plus 1 on re-valuation = 20 points. Bid four spades.

With 19–21 points and adequate trump support, jump partner's major suit response to four.

For example, South, one diamond; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ K J 7 6 ♥ 8 ♦ A Q J 5 4 ♣ A Q 3

20 points re-valued as a raise to the one spade bid. Bid four spades.

With 19–21 points (re-valued) and a sufficiently strong trump suit, a jump re-bid to three should be made in your original suit. The trump suit should be such that two small trumps will be adequate support. Such suits are the following (or others of equivalent strength).

A K x x x x
K Q J x x x
A J 10 9 x x
Q J 10 9 x x
A K Q x x x
K Q J 10 x

When your suit is strong enough for this purpose, you should re-value your hand as if your partner had supported you. That is, count 2 points for each card over four in your trump suit, plus 1 point for each card over three in every side suit.

For example, South, one heart; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ 6 5 ♥ A K Q 4 3 2 ♦ A K 7 ♣ 5 4

Initial valuation 18 points. Re-valuation of fifth and sixth heart adds 2 points making a total of 20 points. Bid three hearts.

♠ 6 5 ♥ A K J 10 4 (9) ♦ A J 3 2 (6) ♣ A 7 (4)

20 points. Plus 1 point on re-valuation = 21 points. Bid three hearts.

With 22–23 points and a trump suit strong enough to play opposite a singleton, jump to game in your major suit.

For example, South, one spade; North, two clubs. South holds:

♠ A K 7 6 5 3 2 (10) ♥ 5 4 ♦ A K (7) ♣ K 6 (3)

20 points. Plus 3 points on re-valuation = 23 points. Bid four spades.

In other situations, with 21 points or over, a forcing take-out is in order. This is a re-bid of one trick more than necessary in a new suit. This bid is forcing to game, and

suggests a slam if partner has a fair hand. When holding powerful support for partner's suit and more than 21 points, the force may be made *without* a real suit. In other circumstances, however, a fairly good second suit would be indicated.

For example, South, one spade; North, one no-trump. South holds:

♠ K Q J 7 6 3 (8) ♥ A K Q 6 5 (11) ♦ 8 ♣ 3

19 points. Add 3 points on re-valuation. 22 points. Bid three hearts.

Opening bid one diamond—partner one no-trump

♠ A J 6 (5) ♥ A K Q 5 (10) ♦ A Q 10 4 2 (7) ♣ 2

22 points. Bid three hearts.

South, one diamond; North, one spade. South holds:

♠ A Q J 6 (8) ♥ A K 5 (7) ♦ A J 4 3 2 (7) ♣ 6

22 points in support of spades. Bid three hearts.

South, one diamond; North, one no-trump. South holds:

♠ K Q J 6 (7) ♥ 8 ♦ A K Q 5 4 (10) ♣ A Q 3 (6)

23 points. Bid three spades.

A reverse of two spades is a strong bid but is *not forcing*. With this power-house, no option of passing can be allowed to partner. The jump in spades, contrary to popular impression, does not indicate a five-card suit, and partner should not, as a rule, raise spades without four trumps.

SUMMARY

Re-bids by Opening Bidder

Re-value your hand (*a*) when raising partner's suit, as if you were the responding hand; (*b*) if partner raises your suit,

count 2 points for each card over four in the trump suit, plus 1 point for each card over three in every side suit.

12–13 points. You have a bare minimum. Your first re-bid will be a minimum: one no-trump, one in a new suit, or a re-bid of your suit, or a single raise of partner's suit. You will not bid game unless partner forces you.

14–16 points. You are still in the minimum zone. Your first re-bid will be a minimum. Should partner respond with two-over-one, you are prepared to bid two no-trumps with 15–17 points, or raise his suit to the three-level. Do not make an encouraging bid (a jump or a reverse), but bid game if partner invites it.

16–19 points. You have a good hand. Make an encouraging re-bid directly if your hand calls for it, such as a jump raise in partner's suit with 17–19 points, reverse with 18–20 points, a new suit at the three-level with 18–20 points, a re-bid in your own suit over partner's raise with 16–19 points. Or make a 'waiting' re-bid first, with the intention of bidding again. A waiting re-bid may be a one-over-one with 12–19 points, or two in a lower-ranking suit with 13–19 points.

20 points or more. Your hand is a powerful one. Game is either assured or highly probable if partner responded. You have opened with two no-trumps with 22–24 points, or three no-trumps with 25–27 points, or a two-bid using the Rule of 22 with 22 points or more, if your hand fulfilled the requirements. Otherwise, you opened with one in a suit with 19–24 points. On the second round make a game-forcing bid—a single jump in a new suit with 21 points or more.

Jump to two no-trumps or three no-trumps over partner's response of one with 19–20 and 21–22 points respectively.

Bid three no-trumps over partner's bid of two in a suit

with 17–21 points, and three no-trumps over one no-trump with 20–22 points.

Bid game in your own suit over partner's single raise with 20–22 points, re-valued.

Make a jump bid in your own suit with 19–21 points re-valued, or a jump to four in your own suit with 22–24 points re-valued.

Jump partner's suit to four with 19–21 points re-valued.

CHAPTER XIII

Re-bids by Responder

5-10 Point Hands

When responder's hand is in the minimum range (6–10 points), re-bidding is fairly simple. If you have made a limited response—one no-trump, or a single raise of opener's suit—your partner is likely to pass, leaving no further problem. If he makes an encouraging re-bid, he announces that in spite of your weakness he is interested in game. You should, therefore, carry him to game with 8–10 points, but decline the invitation with 6 and, usually, with 7 points.

For example, North, one heart; South, one no-trump; North, two no-trumps. You, South, hold:

♠ K 7 6 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ 7 6 5 3

7 points. Partner's re-bid shows 18–19 points. You, therefore, have a border-line holding, as your side will have 25 or 26 points. The suggested bid is three no-trumps, as you may make the contract with 25 points if you are lucky, and should probably make it with 26. With the King of diamonds instead of the Ace, pass.

North, one heart; South, one no-trump; North, two hearts; or, North, one heart; South, one no-trump; North, two diamonds—neither the two-heart bid nor the two-diamond bid made by North is extremely encouraging.

However, partner might have a fairly nice hand, 16 or 17 points. With 6–8 points, you should pass or give a preference. With 9 or 10 points, bid two no-trumps or raise the suit which you can better support.

For example, North, one spade; South, one no-trump; North, two spades. You, South, hold:

♠ 7 5 3 ♥ Q 10 4 3 (2) ♦ K 6 2 (3) ♣ K 5 4 (3)
8 points. Pass.

♠ Q 6 3 (2) ♥ K 5 4 (3) ♦ A 7 2 (4) ♣ 6 5 4 2
9 points. Bid two no-trumps.

North, one spade; South, one no-trump; North, two hearts. You, South, hold:

♠ Q 6 5 (2) ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ A 6 3 (4) ♣ Q 5 4 3 (2)
8 points. Bid two spades.

♠ Q 6 ♥ Q 7 5 3 ♦ A 4 2 ♣ 6 5 4 2
10 points in support of hearts (8 plus 2). Bid three hearts.

If partner 'reverses' over one no-trump, you should keep the bidding open with 7 or more points, as his bid indicates 18–20 points.

For example, North, one diamond; South, one no-trump; North, two spades. You, South, hold:

♠ 8 5 2 ♥ K 6 5 4 ♦ Q 7 ♣ Q 10 6 3
7 points. Bid two no-trumps.

♠ 7 5 3 ♥ K 6 4 2 ♦ Q 7 ♣ J 6 5 3
6 points. Pass.

♠ J 6 4 2 ♥ Q 5 4 3 ♦ K 6 ♣ 7 4 3
8 points in support of spades. Bid three spades.

♠ Q 6 ♥ Q 7 4 3 ♦ 9 4 3 2 ♣ Q 7 6
6 points. Bid three diamonds—a mere preference bid.

♠ J 7 6 ♥ Q 5 3 ♦ Q 4 3 ♣ J 5 4 2

6 points. Pass. Though diamonds may be a better spot, there is no use in getting a trick higher with this holding.

NOTE: Four trumps must be held to justify raising a reverse bid.

When you have given partner a single raise and he re-bids to three of the same suit, you should pass with 6 points and usually with 7 (borderline holding), but go on to four with 8–10.

If over your raise, partner re-bids a new suit, this is a one-round force. If you can do nothing else, you must take partner back to his first suit. This bid, in a new suit, though showing a strong hand, is likely to indicate doubt about the trump suit. Consequently, with only three trumps, it is well to be careful about jumping to four in that suit, even with maximum points.

For example, North, one spade; South, two spades; North, three hearts. You, South, hold:

♠ Q 6 5 ♥ 6 4 3 2 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A 7 5 3

8 points for hearts. Bid four hearts. Game will be hard to make, but four hearts will probably be as good a contract as three spades; you are not permitted to pass.

North, one spade; South, two spades; North, three clubs. You, South, hold:

♠ K 7 5 4 ♥ A 6 3 2 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ 6 4

9 points. Bid four spades.

♠ K 7 3 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ 7 6 4 3 2 ♣ 6 5

10 points at spades and 9 at no-trumps. Bid three no-trumps, not four spades.

♠ Q 7 3 ♥ A 6 ♦ 5 4 3 2 ♣ J 6 4 3

8 points for spades. Bid only three spades; your trumps are too weak for a stronger bid, since partner has not re-bid the suit.

You cannot pass three clubs, and four clubs might simply push the hand to four spades.

When partner's re-bid is two no-trumps, he indicates a strong hand, 17–19 points, but also the probability of a four-card suit. Consequently, if a three-trump raise has been given, the suit should be abandoned. With 8 or more points for no-trumps, raise to three no-trumps. Show another five-card suit or pass with fewer points—the two no-trump bid is not forcing. With good four-card support and 8 or more points, jump to four in partner's suit.

For example, North, one spade; South, two spades; North, two no-trumps. You, South hold:

♠ Q 6 5 3 ♥ 4 ♦ A 5 3 2 ♣ 6 5 3 2

9 points. Bid four spades.

♠ Q 4 2 ♥ 6 ♦ A 7 4 3 2 ♣ 6 5 4 3

8 points. Bid three diamonds.

♠ Q 7 4 3 ♥ 6 ♦ Q 5 4 3 ♣ 6 4 3 2

7 points. Bid three spades.

♠ Q 5 2 ♥ 7 4 ♦ A 6 4 3 ♣ K 5 4 2

9 points. Bid three no-trumps.

♠ Q 7 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A J 4 3 ♣ 6 4 3 2

7 points. Pass.

When you have made a one-over-one response with fewer than 9 points, or a bid of two in a new suit on 9 points, pass partner's next bid as a rule, or give a preference, unless he forces or makes a strong re-bid.

10-13 Point Hands

This is the range of encouraging responses—hands strong enough to invite partner to bid a game, but too weak to

insist that game be reached. If partner makes a minimum re-bid, make a further re-bid encouraging him to continue to game.

For example, North, one club; South, one heart; North, one no-trump. You, South, hold:

♠ Q 7 4 ♥ A Q 5 3 ♦ K 6 4 2 ♣ 7 6

11 points. Bid two no-trumps. With 11 points, a further effort towards game should be made.

North, one club; South, one spade; North, two clubs. You, South, hold:

♠ A 10 5 3 2 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ A 7 2 ♣ 6 4

9 points. Pass. 9 points is not enough for a further constructive bid, and the hand is likely to play as well at two clubs as at two spades.

North, one diamond; South, one heart; North, two hearts. You, South, hold:

♠ 6 5 ♥ A Q 10 7 4 ♦ 6 3 2 ♣ K 5 4

11 points. (Note: One extra point for the hearts, on re-valuation.) Bid three hearts. Partner may have only 14 points, in which case he can pass, as the partnership will have only 25. With more, he will continue to game.

Substitute the Ace of clubs for the King, and four hearts should be bid. 12 points plus 14 gives the required 26.

North, one spade; South, two hearts; North, three hearts. You, South, hold:

♠ 6 3 ♥ A Q 10 7 4 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ K 6 2

11 points. Bid four hearts. Partner, by raising to the three-level, has guaranteed a minimum of 15 points; this, added to your 11, makes 26.

North, one heart; South, two clubs; North, two no-trumps. You, South, hold:

♠ 7 3 ♥ K 6 5 ♦ 7 3 2 ♣ A K 6 5 3

11 points. Bid three hearts. You have enough for game, as partner has shown at least 15 points. He will not pass three hearts, as he knows your bid indicates about 11, and this, with his 15, makes 26. The Three heart bid is forcing in this sequence.

When partner makes an encouraging re-bid, you naturally go on to game; the only question here is whether a slam might be possible. With 10–11 points, a slam would be a possibility only if partner makes a game-forcing bid.

However, with 12–13 points a slam might be possible if partner jumped to three no-trumps, jumped to three or four in his own suit, or raised your suit to game. A slam try should be given in these cases, if the hand fits reasonably well.

13-17 Point Hands

This represents the game range if partner's opening bid is in the minimum range. In this zone you may have solved your problem by showing your strength on the first round, that is, by a jump in no-trumps or a jump raise. The further bidding is then up to partner. The only remaining problem will be whether to bid a slam if partner makes a slam try. If your hand is near the maximum (15–17 points), you bid the slam; if near minimum (13–15 points), you decline the invitation. If your first response was a one-round force, bid game or make a second forcing bid.

For example, North, one heart; South, two diamonds, North, two hearts. You, South, hold:

♠ Q J 7 ♥ 6 5 ♦ A Q J 4 3 ♣ K J 6

15 points. Bid three no-trumps. Fifteen points should be enough to overcome the possible misfit in diamonds and hearts. Substitute a small spade for the Queen (13 points) and only two no-trumps should be bid.

North, one spade; South, two hearts; North, two spades. You, South, hold:

♠ A J 7 ♥ K Q 7 5 3 ♦ K 6 4 ♣ 5 2

14 points in support of spades. Bid four spades; the partnership should have 26 points.

18-Point Hands and Over

This represents the slam zone. Eighteen or 19 points, of course, will not produce a slam if partner's hand is a minimum, but will still bring the total up to 31 or 32, which is close enough to justify a strong try, leaving it to partner to bid the slam if he is a few points above a minimum. Responder's proper procedure is a game-forcing take-out in a new suit—a jump of one trick more than necessary to overcall.

In rebidding, the responder should re-value his hand in the same manner as the opener bidder. He should re-value his hand as dummy if he intends to support a second suit bid by partner.

For example, North, one spade; South, two clubs; North, two hearts. South holds:

♠ 6 ♥ K 5 4 3 ♦ J 6 2 ♣ A K 7 5 3

13 points opposite a spade bid. Not enough to insist on game, in view of a possible misfit. However, when partner bids two hearts, the hand is re-valued in terms of a raise in hearts—15 points. Eleven points in high cards, plus 3 points for the difference in heart length and the shortest suit, plus 1 point for the 5 card side suit headed by the Ace King. Bid four hearts.

CHAPTER XIV

Slam Bidding

The point-count offers a very accurate method for bidding slams in no-trumps—a subject already covered under No-trump Bidding (see Chapter 7).

Slams in a suit, however, cannot be bid solely on the basis of point-count. In addition, consideration must be given to controls, adequate strength in the trump suit, and the danger of duplication of values.

However, point-count is of great value in indicating the *probability* of a slam. Thirty-three to thirty-four points are likely to produce a slam, and when the partnership bidding shows that this number of points is held, serious consideration should be given to a slam contract. This number of points will usually contain the necessary controls and a good trump suit. Ace controls can be checked by the Blackwood Convention. If the trump suit appears shaky, a better contract may be sought; but if none is available, it may be better to stop short of slam.

Duplication of values must be kept in mind. Sometimes the probability of duplication can be visualised and the slam avoided. In other cases it is a pure guess whether duplication is present.

By far the most important phase of bidding a slam is completed at, or below, the game level. In most cases one partner or the other will know by the time game is reached whether

or not a slam is probable, so he will simply bid the slam or pass. In some cases, however, further exploration may be necessary to determine whether two tricks are off the hand. A bid beyond game should be made only when the higher contract is judged to be reasonably secure. In a high percentage of such cases a slam should eventually be reached. An ultimate contract of five in a major or no-trumps is something ordinarily to be avoided, but a certain number of hands have to be played at such contracts.

The methods of exploring the ground beyond game are the following:

1. *A bid to five in the major suit agreed on.* This definitely passes the decision to partner. Partner should go on to six with added values or if he considers his values particularly favourably for a slam. (Aces are the most desirable holding in this situation; also, very strong trumps.)

2. *A check for Aces by bidding the Blackwood four no-trumps.* In most cases Blackwood is useful only for checking controls. That is, the player initiating this bid feels that the hand should probably play at a slam, but he wishes to make certain that the partnership has the necessary controls. He is not interested in further vague values in partner's hand; the bidding has already disclosed sufficient values for the slam. But are they *right* values? If the values are Kings, Queens, and singletons, and two Aces are missing, the slam cannot be made. To justify the use of Blackwood, a player should feel that a slam contract is in the cards if the values already shown by partner include the necessary Aces. If further values, as well as Aces, are needed, Blackwood should not be employed, but rather a cue-bid or a five-bid. Or a player may be confident about Aces, but may nevertheless feel that partner must have some added values to insure

the slam. In this case, also, Blackwood should not be employed.

3. *Last and the most important: The New Asking Bid.*

The New Asking Bid

The New Asking Bid method includes a number of improvements and new, revolutionary features. There is a new convention to determine precisely *the key cards* and the *length of the trump suit* held by either partner. The method is called, paradoxically enough, the Culbertson 4–5 trump convention. This startling convention will please the players who have been stumped again and again by the lack of precise knowledge about their partners' trump holdings. The number of slams bid and lost, and of makeable slams not bid, because there is no way of being certain of partner's trump suit—its length and its key cards—is legion. The new 4–5 trump convention solves this problem.

The scope of Asking Bids has been extended and their responses improved and simplified. The Blackwood, one of the few slam conventions retained, has been modified and fitted into the Asking Bid. For advanced players, New Asking Bids have been developed for use in no-trump bidding, after the forcing two-bid, pre-emptive bids, cue-bids in opponents' suits, and other special cases. Not the least of the services rendered by the Asking Bid is the elimination of the whole mass of complicated and confusing slam conventions that have crept into the slam field in vain attempts to render slam bidding more intelligent.

Automatic Slam Bids and Asking Bids

There are two basic requirements for any slam bid; the partnership hands must have the expectancy of 12 *playing tricks* for a small slam and 13 for a grand slam; and there

must be enough top playing tricks to insure control of the first and second leads (Aces, voids, singletons and Kings). Slam hands must have mass and 'leaders' (controls).

If you are armed only with a point-count (or honour-trick count), you cannot get far in slam bidding. There is a large number of hands which have more than enough high cards and distributional points for a slam bid, and yet they go down as the opponents turn up with missing aces or other high cards.[1] Hence, the rigid necessity for special conventions, such as Blackwood, to make certain that the missing slam links (Aces and Kings) are not in the enemy's hands. By checking his point-count total (or honour-trick total) with the controls, the player is a step higher in his climb to scientific slam bidding. But he is still far from his goal. There remains a most valuable and important group of slams that can be reached only through the Asking Bid. It is the family of *distributional slams* where the dominant factor is not so much the Ace-King controls (also reached by the Asking Bid) but the *distributional controls*—voids, singletons, and, in some cases, doubletons.

West	East
♠ A K Q 9 6 3	♠ 10 8 7 5 4 2
♥ x x x	♥ ——
♦ A 9 8 6	♦ K Q
♣ ——	♣ 10 9 8 7 5

These hands contain a cold grand slam. On a point-count valuation the bidding will reveal for both a measly 18 points in high cards; and if we count 6 points for East's void and 3 points for West's lengths, we still have only 27 points—quite far from any slam. And as for controls, Blackwood

[1] Only in no-trump bidding where the high-card point-count is not too mixed up with distributional points, is it possible to get an automatic point-count for slams. But such hands come up once in a blue moon.

is useless; ace-showing is a little better in this case, but confusing and incomplete. I shall anticipate the presentation of the Asking Bid and show how, by using a few Asking Bids, it is scientifically impossible to miss a grand slam.

West	East
1 ♠	3 ♠
4 ♦ (1)	4 ♥ (2)
4 N.T. (3)	5 ♣ (4)
5 ♦ (5)	5 ♥ (6)
5 N.T. (7)	6 ♥ (8)
7 ♠ (9)	Pass

(1) Four diamonds is an Asking Bid, seeking information about diamonds and outside strength, if any.

(2) Four hearts shows the diamond King or a singleton diamond, and the heart Ace or heart void, i.e., second-round control in the asked suit, plus first-round control outside.

(3) A new-trump asking convention based on the use of four-five no-trump *after* any Asking Bid. (When used *before*, it is Blackwood.)[1] In this new treatment, the four no-trump asks about key honour cards in the trump suit. The responses are: five clubs to show the trump Knave or less; five diamonds to show one of the three top honours; five hearts, two of the three top honours; five spades, all three top honours.

(4) East's five club response denies better than the spade Knave.

(5) West's five diamond bid is a repeat Asking Bid requesting further information about the diamond suit.

(6) In the New Asking Bids, the response to a repeat Asking Bid in this situation (i.e., after the first response showed an outside Ace or void) is positive except when responder holds King and *two small* cards in the repeat Asking suit, in which case the proper response is a sign-off in the agreed suit. In this case East, with K–Q blank in diamonds, of course gives a positive response. His five heart bid shows third-round control *and* either a heart void or the A–K of hearts.

[1] Or Culbertson, if the original 4/5 no-trump convention be played.

(7) The second step of the new Culbertson four-five trump Asking convention. The previous four-no-trump bid asked for key trump honours; this follow-up five no-trumps asks for trump *length*. The responses are: six clubs to show three trumps or fewer; six diamonds to show four trumps; six hearts, five or six trumps; six spades, seven or more.

(8) East's six-heart response shows at least five trumps, which West will need to ruff his losers.

(9) Now that the Asking Bids have matched, with scientific precision, the six losers in West's hand with six winners in East's —an Ace (or void), a King, a Queen, and trump length—the grand slam can be bid with certainty.

It is evident that the point-count or honour-trick count valuation of slam bids is immeasurably improved by the addition of the Asking Bid. The great majority of winning slams will be captured, and losing slams will be avoided.

There remains one step more to be taken if a player wishes to bid slams scientifically. This step is possible, however, only to fairly advanced players. It is to throw away the point-count or honour-trick valuation of slam bids and use a far more precise count based on playing tricks (plastic or natural valuation), which is the specific count of winners and losers in the hand.

In the bidding below game-level, the count of winners and losers is often difficult because the player's suits are full of gaping holes and there is not enough information from partner (and opponents) to fill in these holes adequately. But in slam bidding, where the strength is concentrated in partners' hands, and the losers are relatively few, plastic valuation is supreme. The whole problem is narrowed down to a few specific losers, and each loser is handled *individually* by matching it against a corresponding winner in partner's hand (seeking controls). Each loser has its own case history.

Compared to this individual treatment of losers, any method of slam valuation, such as the point-count and honour-trick methods which are based on a *total* count of the hands, is less accurate and less refined. This is why no excellent player uses in his slam valuation the point-count or honour-trick method—except as a general indication or check up of conclusions reached by the favourite method of all expert players: the direct count of losers and winners.

The Basic Asking Bid[1]

For thousands of couples who play their weekly match games and for all advanced players, the New Asking Bid will prove to be a nearly perfect method for making slams and for avoiding unmakeable slams. The New Asking Bid is the only slam method in bridge that locates not only Aces and Kings but *voids and singletons* (distributional controls); and it does this at a maximum economy of bidding levels.

An Asking Bid is: *Any bid in a new suit at the level of four, or higher, after a previous suit has been raised; or, if no suit has been raised, any double-jump bid in a new suit.*

SOUTH	NORTH	SOUTH	NORTH
1 ♠	3 ♠	1 ♥	4 ♣? *Asking bid*
4 ♦? *Asking bid*		1 ♦	3 ♥? *Asking bid*

The *agreed* trump suit is the suit that immediately precedes the Asking Bid. In the foregoing examples, spades, hearts and diamonds are the agreed trump suits, respectively.

An Asking Bid is forcing for one round. Thereafter, a second and a third Asking Bid may be made, but only by

[1] The Basic Asking Bid is a simplified form of the New Asking Bid Convention for use in better than average games. Those who have learned Blackwood can also master the Asking Bid—and with far greater profit to their slam bidding.

the original asker; partner may not re-enter the bidding on his own. The Asking Bid *shows* nothing. It *asks* for specific information of a wheel-within-wheel type: for the first- and second-round controls in the Asked *suit* and *in the hand*. In the Asking method, the point is the Asked suit; the counter-point, the rest of the hand. If you keep this in mind you will find that the responses to the Asking Bids, though complex, are really and basically simple.

Responses to the First Asking Bid

Unless otherwise specified, the terms Ace and King in the table below include their *equivalents*, void and singleton, respectively—in other words, first- and second-round controls. Assuming the Asking Bid was made at the four-level, responses are:[1]

THE RESPONDER HOLDS:	THE RESPONSE IS:
1. Q J or less (2 top losers) in the Asked suit; or, even with a King in Asked suit, an aceless hand. NOTE. In the example on the right, spades is the agreed trump suit, 4 Clubs? is the first asking bid, and the response is underlined.	SIGN OFF, by returning to to the agreed trump suit at the lowest level. Ex. 4♣? 4♠ Sign off.
2. King in the Asked suit and Ace outside.	Bid outside Ace. With trump Ace jump one level. Ex. 4♣? 4♦ or 4♥.
3. Ace in the Asked suit and no Ace outside.	Raise the asked suit. Ex. 4♣? 5♣.

[1] The same responses obtain when the asking bid is made at a three or a five level, except that they are proportionately one level lower or higher.

4. King in the Asked suit and 2 Aces outside; or Ace in the Asked suit and 1 Ace outside (voids are not counted in N.T. responses).	Bid four No-trumps. Ex. 4♣? 4 N.T.
5. King in the Asked suit and 3 Aces outside; or Ace in the Asked suit and 2 Aces outside (count only Aces).	Bid five No-trumps. Ex. 4♣? 5 N.T.
6. King (or singleton) in the Asked suit and Ace of implicitly agreed trump suit.	Jump in trump suit. Ex. 4♣? 5♠.

Voids. With a King in the Asked suit and an Ace *and* a void outside, show the outside Ace and suppress the void until a later round. With a void in the Asked suit and an Ace outside, show the Ace, treating the void as a King.

Second Asking Bid and Responses

After first Asking Bid and response, a bid in any but the agreed trump suit is a *second Asking Bid.*

SOUTH	NORTH	
1♣	1♠	South's 4♥ is the first response.
3♠	4♦? *First Asking*	North's 5♦ is a second Asking
4♥	5♦? *Second Asking*	Bid in the *same* suit (a repeat). If North bids 5♣ instead of 5♦ it would be a second Asking Bid in a *new* suit.

The responses to all second Asking Bids deal *exclusively* with second-round controls.[1]

[1] If the response to the first Asking Bid was a sign-off, the second Asking Bid in a *new suit* is treated like the first Asking Bid (Aces must be shown).

The following are responses to the second Asking Bid—assuming a five-level.[1] Unless otherwise specified, the term King includes its equivalent, a singleton.

THE RESPONDER HOLDS: *In Asked Suit*	*Outside*	THE RESPONSE IS:
1. Q J (or less)	no matter	Sign off.
2. King	King (except) agreed trump)	Bid suit with outside King. With 2 Kings show one on next higher level to asking suit.
3. King	King (trump)	Raise the agreed trump suit (usually to six).
4. King	No King	Bid 5 no-trumps. Prefer No. 2 response to No. 3, No. 3 to No. 4.

5. With 4 Kings bid the first pair of Kings. Follow up with a raise in the trump suit on the next Asking Bid.

Voids are treated like second-round controls. Raise a void suit only when it has been previously suppressed or not yet bid (see First Asking Bids).

Third Asking Bids and Responses

When second Asking Bid occurs at the five-level, the six-level is reserved for the *third* Asking Bid. *The purpose of the third Asking Bid is to find out from partner about his Queens or doubletons—third-round controls.* The object of the third asking bid, when at the six-level, is usually a grand slam, offering a fool-proof method for reaching grand slams that heretofore were in a zone of wild guesses. There are third Asking Bids, however, which may occur at a five-level,

[1] The same responses obtain when the Asking Bid is made at a three- or five-level, except that they are proportionately one level lower or higher. See *Contract Bridge Complete.*

when the first Asking Bid is made at a three-level. They are then most useful for small slams.

Responses to the third Asking Bid (at six-level):

If responder holds no Queen or doubleton in the Asked suit, he signs off.

If responder holds a Queen or doubleton in the Asked suit *with* an outside Queen (no outside doubleton is counted), he may show the outside Queen *en passant*, provided it does not force the asker to a seven bid in a suit or six no-trumps. Failing this (or with no outside Queen), the responder must bid the required number of no-trumps (including six).

The general range of Asking Bids is from a three- to six-level, inclusive. The *responses* may be in a seven range, but any *free* seven bid is a final trump bid—even when not made in the agreed trump suit.

The New Blackwood

When used with the Asking Bid, Blackwood is retained as an auxiliary to the Asking Bid, but modified as follows:

1. Blackwood (and the non-forcing) 4–5 no-trump convention is restricted to bids *before* any Asking Bid. The space for free 4–5 no-trump bids *after* any asking bid is reserved for the Trump Asking Convention (see below).

2. There is always an *agreed* trump suit and it is always the *first* suit that has been bid by the 4 no-trump bidder. South bids 1♠ North bids 3♥ South 3♠ North bids 4 no-trumps, which is Blackwood. The agreed trump suit, however, is hearts, not spades. This is important. It is the first time in bridge that a deadlock, which often arises when

each partner holds a powerful suit, can be broken at a sufficiently low level.

3. After an Ace-showing response to Blackwood, Kings can be explored either by a Blackwood 5 no-trump, or by a second Asking Bid (usually one level cheaper).

The New Trump-Asking Convention

There has always been a crying need in slam bidding for a simple method to find out about the specific honours and length in partner's trump suit. This need has now been filled by the New Trump-Asking Convention, as follows:

After any Asking Bid and response, a bid of four no-trumps is a trump-investigating convention requiring partner to give information on the key-cards of the agreed trump suit.[1] The responses (forced) are:

Five clubs, holding a Knave or less in trumps.

Five diamonds, holding one of three top honours (A K, or Q) in trumps.

Five hearts, holding two of three top honours (A K, A Q or K Q) in trumps.

Five spades, holding all three of three top honours in trumps (A K Q).

These key trumps must be shown regardless of the trump length. If, after one of these responses, the four no-trump bidder follows up with *five* no-trumps, he requests specific information on the length of partner's agreed trump suit. Partner's responses (forced) are:

Six clubs, holding three trumps or fewer.

Six diamonds, holding four trumps.

[1] Outside of Asking Bids, the Trump-Asking Convention may be used with other conventions, such as Ace-showing cue-bids and the conventional forcing two-club bid.

Six hearts, holding five or six trumps.

Six spades, holding seven or more trumps.

If, for any reason, the four no-trump level cannot be used, then the five no-trump is used in a manner similar to the four no-trump (for honour cards) but without the follow-up for length.

Space does not permit outlining here the new Asking Bids after Two Bids, Pre-emptive Bids and Overcalls, as well as many other finer points and illustrations. They are fully explained in my new book *Contract Bridge Complete*. Even as here presented for the first time, the advantages and intellectual appeal of the New Asking Bid will become apparent to advanced and tournament players.

Here is an example of the value of the Asking Bid. The hand which, far more than any other, was responsible for the defeat of the World Champions in the recent team match in St. Louis is exceedingly interesting, involving as it does a delicate and difficult choice between six no-trumps, which was iron-clad, and six spades, which was beaten on a ruff.

The hand proves beyond doubt that even one of the greatest pairs in the world, such as John Crawford and B. Jay Becker, is helpless unless it uses a more scientific method of slam bidding—the Asking Bid.

This was the hand:

West dealer
North–South vulnerable

NORTH
♠ A Q 9 8 6 5
♥ K 5
♦ 5 4
♣ K 7 3

SOUTH
♠ K J
♥ Q 10 8 3
♦ A K 7 2
♣ A Q 10

The bidding, with Becker in the North position, Crawford in the South, went as follows:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	1 ♠	2 ♥	3 ♦ (1)
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♣ (2)
Pass	4 ♠ (3)	Pass	5 ♠ (4)
Pass	6 ♠ (5)	Pass	Pass
Pass			

East laid down the Ace of hearts, and West showed out. A heart ruff then set the contract. Obviously, six no-trumps was a lay-down for North-South.

Analysis of the bidding:

(1) Crawford, vulnerable, and scenting a slam, wisely refrains from accepting a non-vulnerable penalty. He makes the waiting bid of three diamonds.

(2) After Becker's normal rebid in spades, Crawford reasons that his partner most probably holds six spades to the A–Q, since there is not much outside to justify the opening one-spade bid. Sure of the spade suit, Crawford proceeds with preliminary tests for a small slam. Warned by his own Q–10–8–3 of hearts, he proceeds with utmost caution, bidding four clubs to show the Ace and indicate 'a desire' for the slam.

(3) A more reckless player in Becker's position might have bid four no-trumps to show the King of hearts, and, as it happened, he thereby would have avoided the future tragedy. (After minimum rebidding throughout, a four no-trump call by North

would certainly not be Blackwood.) But the bid is a dangerous plunge, and besides, Becker doubtless reasoned that East would not lead away from the A–Q of hearts against a no-trump slam bid by North. A less experienced player might have bid five clubs to show the King, but Becker wisely refused to heed Crawford's 'desire'; he signed off with four spades.

(4) After Becker's sign-off, Crawford makes what I consider a brilliant bid—five spades. Some experts criticised the bid, preferring a pass, but they would have missed a spade slam if Becker (as was likely) had a singleton heart. Other experts criticised Crawford for not using Blackwood, with the intention of following up the four no-trump call with a King-searching five no-trumps. This would have disclosed the King of hearts and Crawford then could have safely bid six no-trumps. The Blackwood idea is undoubtedly better than resting supinely at four spades, but it is certainly not so good as Crawford's five-spade bid. If Becker did not hold the heart King, Blackwood would not reveal whether Becker had a singleton, or a doubleton, heart. Why should Crawford visualise the K–x of hearts rather than the more probable singleton or doubleton? Becker, to justify his opening, could very well hold six or seven spades headed by A–Q, the Q–J–10 of diamonds and the K–J of clubs, with one or two low hearts. In any case Crawford was safe at five spades even if his partner had two heart losers, hence the very fine five-spade bid which virtually begged Becker to bid six with a singleton heart or to pass with a worthless doubleton.

(5) Becker's bid of six spades is irreproachable, as was his bidding throughout this sad hand.

Thus, both Becker and Crawford, bidding irreproachably and at times brilliantly, were forced step by step to inexorable defeat. But what defeated them was not their individual errors, nor that capricious Fate which sometimes penalises superior play. No. What led them to this defeat was, simply and obviously, a defective method of slam bidding.

I will now show how, by using a better method of slam bidding, even Mr. and Mrs. Average Player, Second Class, could not fail to reach the winning small slam at no-trumps on this hand—provided only that they memorised the simple and automatic responses to Asking Bids.

This is how the bidding would go with Asking Bids:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♠	2 ♥	3 ♦
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♥ (1)
Pass	5 ♠ (2)	Pass	6 ♥ (3)
Pass	6 N.T. (4)	(final bid)	

Analysis:

(1) South's four-heart bid in the opponents' suit is an *Asking Overcall*, with spades the agreed suit. Any *jump* bid in the opponents' suit (after partner opened the bidding) or, if partner's suit has been raised or rebid, any bid of the opponents' suit at the four-level, is an Asking Bid requesting information about the asked suit—in this case, hearts—and outside controls.[1] The asking overcall does not, as a rule, shut out the normal, traditional cue-bid of the opponents' suit; the latter is non-jump (not unnecessarily high) and is usually made at the first opportunity. For instance, in the above bidding, if South had bid three hearts instead of three diamonds over East's two hearts, it would have been a regulation cue-bid indicating Ace or void in hearts, with slam possibilities.

(2) The five-spade response to the four-heart Asking Bid is the regulation response to show (a) second-round control in the asked suit (K–x or singleton) and the Ace in the agreed trump suit, spades. At the same time the response denies the heart Ace.

[1] The only way this situation differs from the basic definition of an Asking Bid is that the Asked suit is the opponents' and that opener's rebid of his own suit is sufficient to establish the trump suit.

(3) South now knows that North has either K–x in hearts or a singleton. North cannot have two small hearts; he would have signed off over four hearts with four spades. Therefore the only problem South must now resolve is whether North has the heart King, in which case six no-trumps is the marked contract, or a singleton heart, in which case six spades is obviously the winning contract. Except with the Asking Bids, there exists no method to solve this problem; with the Asking method the solution is elementary. South simply makes another Asking Bid.

(4) As a rule, an Asking Bid at the six-level is reserved for information about third-round controls, i.e., the Queen of the Asked suit or a doubleton. Without such control, the proper answer is a sign-off. But in this case North, holding a doubleton heart that includes the *King*, obviously must make the positive response of six no-trumps, and South naturally passes.

CHAPTER XV

Overcalls

No point-count system can adequately cover overcalls, because the high-card content of a hand is not nearly so important as its *winners*, or playing tricks. Consider the following case:

With both sides vulnerable, East deals and bids one spade. Suppose that South holds either of these hands:

1. ♠ 7 5 2	2. ♠ 7 5 2
♥ A 6	♥ 4 3
♦ A Q 4 3 2	♦ A Q J 10 5 4
♣ Q 6 4	♣ K 6

Hand 1 is valued at 13 points under the Culbertson Point-Count; Hand 2, also at 13 points. Yet, reasonable experience will teach anyone that Hand 1 is a dangerous two-diamond overcall, whereas Hand 2 is a safe overcall.

The difference lies in the number of tricks which the two hands are reasonably sure to win at a diamond contract. With Hand 1, South may win only his two Aces and the Queen of diamonds—a bad diamond break may prevent him from winning any low trumps, and the club Queen is not a solid asset. Even with a fair break, South cannot expect to win more than four or five tricks—three short of his commitment when he overcalls with two diamonds.

With Hand 2, however, South is virtually assured of five diamond tricks and has another good prospect in his club King. Thus, even leaving aside South's 'insurance' in his 100 honours in Hand 2, it is obvious that an overcall is far less dangerous with this holding than with Hand 1. And in the final analysis, the criterion of an overcall is its relative danger.

Indeed, it is a serious error to appraise any hand on the same basis for an overcall as for an opening bid. Consider these two South holdings:

3.	4.
♠ A 7 5 4	♠ A 7 5
♥ K 4 3	♥ 6 2
♦ 2	♦ 5 4
♣ A J 5 6 3	♣ K Q 10 9 8 6

Hand 3, counting 12 points in high cards and another point for the fifth club, plus 1 point for fourth spade, is a sound one-club opening, but if the bidding is opened at South's right, by East, with a heart or a spade, it is not safe for South to make any call, including a take-out double. A two-club overcall risks a penalty of from three to five tricks; and if South doubles for a take-out, he must expect a response in his singleton suit, diamonds, leaving him with 'nowhere to go'. Thus, the only sound action with this hand, after an opposing spade or heart bid, is a pass.

Now consider Hand 4. This would not be a sound opening club bid, but it is an acceptable two-club overcall if South is not vulnerable. His club suit alone can be reasonably estimated to produce at least four tricks—probably five—and his spade Ace is, of course, another winner. So nothing horrible can happen to two clubs.

It will have been seen that the primary consideration in overcalling is the solidity, or relative solidity, of the trump suit itself. Compare these two suits:

Example A:	*Example* B:
A Q 6 5 4	A J 10 9 8

The A-Q suit may take only two tricks if the break is very bad; the other suit *must* win three tricks, and may easily win four, even against a bad break. So, as the basis of an overcall, Example B is substantially better, although on point-count reckoning alone, Example A has the higher total.

The same criterion applies to six-card and even seven-card suits. Compare:

Example C:	*Example* D:
♣ A 7 6 5 4 2	♣ A 10 9 8 7 6

Suppose that South overcalls an opening bid with two clubs in both cases. (Of course he must have something on the side.) He runs into trouble, with the next player holding five clubs. (Naturally, that player doubles.) With Example C, South may not win more than two tricks in clubs; with Example D he is assured of three tricks, and he would be very unfortunate not to win four tricks. Even a one-trick difference is an important matter when it comes to putting in an overcall.

The Culbertson Rule of 2 and 3 is perhaps the one rule which average players and experts alike observe with almost religious fervour. This rule, applying specifically to overcalls, is stated as follows in *Contract Bridge Complete*:

When partner has passed or has not yet bid, the maximum expectancy of tricks in his hand should be two winners, if vulnerable, and three winners if not vulnerable. It follows

that the bidder, in order to be reasonably safe, must have in his own hand the total of winners required by the contract, less two or, as the case may be, less three. Thus, to overcall an opponent's one-spade bid with two hearts, a player must have at least six winners if vulnerable and five winners if not vulnerable.

The following table shows the number of winners required for overcalls at various levels of bidding.

Bidding Level	*Winners Vulnerable*	*Winners Not Vulnerable*
One-odd (not the opening bid)	5	4
Two-odd	6	5
Three-odd	7	6
Four-odd	8	7

The obvious exceptions to the Rule of 2 and 3 are:

a. When the opponents do not know how to double for penalties, or are just naturally over-polite;
b. When the bidding clearly indicates that partner, even though he passed, holds a fair hand; and
c. When a sacrifice is advisable to stop a slam.

In many cases it becomes apparent that the opponents are not likely to make game. In such cases the safety margin of expectancy from partner's hand (always assuming he has made no bid) is reduced as follows:

1. If vulnerable, about one winner.
2. If not vulnerable, about two winners.

There is no sense in risking a heavier penalty unless, of course, the player's own hand is so strong as to offer a fair chance for game. However, this does not mean that judicious pushing of opponents should not be indulged in, especially when the bidding overtones make the player feel that the opponents will go on.

CHAPTER XVI

Take-out Doubles and Responses

The main weapon on which the defenders must rely for the purpose of assuming the offensive is the take-out double.

Any double, made at the first opportunity, of any suit-bid up to, and including, three-odd, before partner has made a bid, is a take-out double, not a penalty double; that is, the double demands that partner respond by bidding his best suit, and pass only when he believes opponents' contract can be defeated. (Note: A penalty pass by partner counts as a bid.) A take-out double may also be made by the opening bidder, if his partner has not bid.

Examples:

1.	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♠	Double		
2.	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	1 ♥	1 ♠	Pass
	Pass	Double		
3.	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♦	1 ♥
	1 ♠	Double		

In Bidding Sequences 1 and 2, North's doubles are both for take-outs, since South has not yet bid, and since North has doubled at his first opportunity. In Sequence 3, however, North's double is a penalty double, because South has already bid.

TAKE-OUT DOUBLES AND RESPONSES

The take-out double of a suit-bid of one-odd normally shows about the same minimum strength as an opening bid —13 points. However, as an opponent has already opened the bidding, the *character* of the hand for competitive purposes is of as great, or even greater, importance than the high-card strength. The risk in bidding is greatly increased, especially if partner may have to respond at the two-level. Consequently, if the high-card strength is minimum or near minimum, the doubler must be able to support any suit partner is forced to bid. With greater strength (16 points or more) this requirement may be relaxed somewhat; this applies also when the doubler can take refuge in a strong suit of his own.

The ideal hand-pattern for a take-out double is a singleton in opponent's suit and four cards in the others. This will afford strong support for any suit partner may bid. With this type of hand a heavy defeat is unlikely, and if any defeat results, the chances are that the opponents could have scored as much, or more, at their own contract.

Where several cards are held in opponents' suit, however, the situation is quite the opposite. If partner has to bid a four-card suit, only seven cards may be held in the suit. Furthermore, three tricks will probably be lost immediately in the opponents' suit. This means that it is dangerous to enter the bidding. Also, this type of hand is likely to work out better on the defensive—the opponents are unlikely to score game.

With three or four cards in opponents' suit, about 16 points should be held to enter the bidding.

When a player makes a take-out double he should be prepared for a weak major suit response or have a good bid of his own.

Another sound type of double is a strong hand with a good suit of one's own, though not particularly good support for other suits. The procedure here is to double and then bid the suit over partner's response. The object of this bid is to show a stronger hand than a mere overcall. Sixteen points are required for this bid; with fewer, a mere overcall is sufficient.

The requirement for doubling one no-trump is 16 points, minimum.

If vulnerable, it might be well to have slightly more than the minimum for adequate protection in all doubles.

Examples:

North, one heart; East holds:

♠ J 7 6 2 (1) ♥ 5 ♦ A Q 4 3 (7) ♣ A 6 5 3 (5)

14 points. 11 high-card points and 3 raise points for any suit responses. This is a sound double as there is good support for any response by partner.

♠ Q 7 3 (2) ♥ 8 ♦ A Q 6 5 3 (7) ♣ A 5 4 2 (5)

14 points. This is a good double. Although the support for spades is not too strong, it should be adequate, as a response of only one spade is necessary.

North, one spade; East holds:

♠ 7 5 2 ♥ A K 6 ♦ A K 4 ♣ 7 5 4 3

14 points. This is a very substantial hand, yet the preferable course of action is to pass. With this distribution, a game against an opening bid is rather unlikely, and there is a very fair chance of taking a sizeable defeat. The opponents are not going to get anywhere, and may possibly get too high. Moreover, it may be possible to enter the bidding later, when the situation is clarified. But, add the Queen of hearts, diamonds or clubs, and a double would be indicated; this would be just too much strength with which to remain quiet.

North, one spade; East holds:

♠ 8 5 ♥ K 10 7 2 (3) ♦ A Q 5 (6) ♣ K Q 4 3 (6)

15 points. This is a sound double with a doubleton spade—somewhat more in honour-points would be required if holding three spades.

The reader should note that the take-out double can be a little lighter when partner can respond at the one-level, than when he will be forced to bid two of a suit. Thus, one club may be doubled more lightly than one spade.

When a player doubles for a take-out, the best hope of game is in a major suit. Consequently, if opponent has opened with a major, the doubler presumably indicates good support for, and four cards in, the other major. If opponent opened with a minor, strong support is indicated by the double in at least one major, and more particularly spades.

North, one no-trump; East holds:

♠ A Q 6 5 4 (7) ♥ K J 6 (4) ♦ A 2 (4) ♣ Q 6 3 (2)

17 points. This is a sound double of one no-trump. A double of a suit asks partner to take out, but a double of one no-trump is primarily a penalty double which partner will take out only if he has a long suit and little strength.

North, one spade; East holds:

♠ 8 6 ♥ A 10 7 5 4 (5) ♦ A K Q 3 (10) ♣ 6 2

15 points. This is a good hand, and staying out of the bidding is likely to cost a partial score, and sometimes even a game. However, the suits are too weak for an overall, and there is no preparation for clubs if one doubles. This is a situation often encountered in contract: there is no perfect bid, and so the best choice of evils must be made. Double, and if partner bids clubs, trouble can usually be averted by escaping in diamonds (and later, if need be, in hearts).

'North, one spade; East holds:

♠ A J 6 4 (5) ♥ 8 ♦ A Q 7 2 (7) ♣ K J 5 3 (5)

17 points. Make a trap pass. You cannot stand a heart response from partner, so you do not double.

Re-bid by Doubler

When partner makes a minimum response, the doubler must bear in mind that his partner has been forced to bid, and consequently may have a four-card suit and no honour strength whatever. Although this possibility must be considered, and the bidding so conducted as to avoid a heavy loss in that event, it would be a mistake to re-bid on the most pessimistic assumption. It is only rarely that partner holds absolutely nothing, so it should be assumed, for the purpose of continuing the bidding, that partner has some slight values, say, about 3 points.

With this in mind, it will be seen that the following schedule of values will come out about right:

To raise partner's suit to the four-level, you need 22 or 23 points, and, of course, four trumps with at least two honours.

To bid three no-trumps, you need 24 points, with (usually) two stoppers in opponents' suit.

To raise partner's suit to the three-level requires 19 points in support, and to bid two no-trumps 20 points, with two stoppers in opponents' suit.

To bid two no-trumps over partner's forced response of two is a very strong bid—close to an opening two no-trump bid. With fewer than 20 points, the proper course is an immediate overcall of one no-trump, not a double.

To make a jump bid in another suit (after having doubled for a take-out) requires about 22 points, re-valued.

A single raise for partner requires about 16 points.

All requirements, it will be seen, are about 3 points higher than where partner has responded to your opening bid.

Where partner responds with two clubs, or one in the lowest ranking suit possible, particular caution should be exercised in raising, as partner may have been forced to respond on a three-card suit.

Examples:

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	Double	Pass	1 ♠
Pass			

East holds:

♠ Q J 7 2 (4) ♥ 6 ♦ A Q 5 4 (7) ♣ A 6 5 3 (5)

16 points. Bid two spades. Partner, with 9 or 10 points after re-valuation, should carry on.

Same bidding; East holds:

♠ Q J 7 5 (4) ♥ 8 ♦ A Q 6 2 (7) ♣ A K 5 4 (8)

19 points. Bid three spades.

Same bidding; East holds:

♠ K Q 3 2 (6) ♥ 7 ♦ A Q J 5 (8) ♣ A K 5 4 (8)

22 points. Bid four spades.

Same bidding; East holds:

♠ A Q 5 (6) ♥ K J 7 (4) ♦ A K J 6 (8) ♣ A Q 7 (6)

24 points. Bid three no-trumps.

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	Double	Pass	2 ♣
Pass			

East holds:

♠ A Q 6 5 (6) ♥ A J 10 (5) ♦ K Q 7 (5) ♣ A 6 2 (4)

20 points. Bid two no-trumps.

North bids one heart; East holds:

♠ A J 4 3 (5) ♥ A J 10 (5) ♦ K 6 2 (3) ♣ A 7 6 (4)

17 points. Bid one no-trump over one heart. Do not double.

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	Double	Pass	2 ♣
Pass			

East holds:

♠ K Q J 7 5 2 (11) ♥ 4 ♦ K J 10 (4) ♣ A Q 7 (6)

21 points. Bid three spades. This bid is not forcing, but is strongly inviting; partner, with 4 points in support, will carry on.

Re-opening the Bidding

When your left-hand opponent opened the bidding and the next two players passed, the situation is very much altered. Here one opponent has shown abject weakness, and there is a presumption that partner has a fair amount of strength. Consequently, a take-out double to re-open the bidding is justified on considerably less strength than is required under normal conditions.

Of course, it is possible that the opponents have miscalculated. The opener may have a big hand and his partner may have passed with moderate values; so there is no sense re-opening on a shoe-string. With a considerable part of your strength in opponents' suit, it is usually wiser to pass. Partner's strength in this case is limited; because of your

strength in the enemy's suit *he* can't have much in that suit, and so can't have made a trap pass. A re-opening risks that the opponents may find a better spot, or that your side has no good contract.

With a singleton in the opponents' suit, however, the possibility of a trap pass by partner should be carefully considered, and a re-opening take-out double made on fairly light holdings.

A quite satisfactory count for re-opening is 11 points, and if a trap pass by partner seems probable, this may be shaded to 10 or even 9 points.

Responses to Take-out Doubles

The average player tends to under-value his hand in responding to the take-out double. He does not seem to realize that when he makes a minimum response in a suit, he has actually made no bid at all, so far as showing any strength goes. What a player should consider is how much strength his partner will play him for. As just stated, partner will not play him for zero values—a blank hand—although it is possible that he may hold one. His partner will play him for about 3 points. Consequently, anything he holds in excess of 3 points is added value, of which partner has no inkling until it is shown to him in the bidding.

Accordingly, with as much as 5 points, and certainly with 6, responder has something to show. Obviously this will not be enough for game if partner has a minimum or near-minimum double, but if doubler makes a jump re-bid, responder, with 6 points, and often with 5, should be delighted to respond further.

It may appear that in some sequences this will leave the partnership a point or two short of the required 26. Actually

this is not so, for 1 or 2 points are usually made up by the enhancement of partner's holdings, due to the fact that he sits over the opening bidder—so long as responder is able to enter his own hand once or twice.

Accordingly, with 5 or 6 points, re-bid if partner makes a strong bid.

Examples:

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	Double	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	?

You, West, hold:

♠ Q 7 6 5 2 (4) ♥ 5 4 3 2 ♦ 8 ♣ Q 5 4 (2)

6 points. 4 points for two Queens, 1 for the five-card trump suit, and 1 more on re-valuation.

Bid four spades. Remember, you would have bid one spade on the following hand (possibly even less):

♠ Q 7 6 3 (2) ♥ 5 4 3 2 ♦ 8 6 ♣ J 5 3 (1)

3 points. This is what partner has a right to expect—quite different from the hand you hold.

North	East	South	West
1 ♠	Double	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 NT	Pass	?

You, West, hold:

♠ 7 6 5 ♥ Q 5 4 (2) ♦ K 10 6 3 (3) ♣ 5 4 2

5 points. Bid three no-trumps. Partner is close to an opening two no-trump bid. (Note: with a bad partner, pass—he won't have the proper values!)

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	Double	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	?

You, West, hold:

♠ J 6 (1) ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ 6 5 4 2 ♣ K J 7 3 (4)

5 points. Bid four spades. If you had the Knave of diamonds instead of the Knave of spades, a pass would perhaps be preferable.

No matter how weak your hand is, you must make a bid when partner doubles; in fact the weaker your hand, the greater the obligation to take out his double. Your partner has accepted full responsibility for any loss incurred by your bidding, but the severe loss which will result from passing will be entirely your fault. A pass should be considered only when you have a strong and long holding in the opponents' suit, so that you can well expect to take several tricks defensively, but cannot hope for many tricks at a contract of your own.

With a hand containing from 8 to 10 points, make a minimum response, but make a further move toward game if partner makes *any* re-bid.

Examples:

North	East	South	West
1 ♦	Double	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	?

You, West, hold:

♠ Q J 7 4 3 (5) ♥ 8 ♦ J 6 5 2 (1) ♣ K 6 2 (3)

9 points. (2 points for a five-card suit, supported by partner.) Bid three spades. Partner with only 16 points will pass; with more he will go on to game.

North	East	South	West
1 ♦	Double	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	?

You, West, hold:

♠ 7 4 ♥ Q 6 3 (2) ♦ 8 6 4 ♣ A J 5 2 (6)

8 points. Bid three hearts. In raising partner when the auction has been along these lines, 6 or 7 points are sufficient. A raise should be given with any hand which would qualify as a single raise if partner *opened* the bidding. Partner shows a minimum of 16 points; holding only that minimum, he will pass three hearts. But remember that this 16 points represents original valuation and may become 17 or 19 points on re-valuation, when you are able to support his suit.

North, one diamond; East, double; South, pass; West holds:

♠ Q J 6 4 (3) ♥ A J 5 3 (6) ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ 4 3

9 points. Bid one spade, and on the next round bid (or raise) hearts. This is a good hand opposite a double, and worth two constructive bids.

Hands with 11–13 points are in the jump-response range. A single jump will tell partner that a game is in prospect if his double is slightly more than a minimum, or possibly even with a minimum if there is an exceptionally good fit. This bid is not forcing, and does not show anything like the strength which would ordinarily be ascribed to jump bids in other situations. As partner cannot assume that you have more than 3 points on a minimum response, so, when 11 points are held, it is essential to tell him that he should keep the bidding going. The only absolute force is to cue-bid opponent's suit. However, it is also possible to jump to game when the correct contract is clearly indicated.

Examples. North, one heart; East, double; South, pass; West holds:

♠ A Q 7 6 3 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ K J 6 ♣ 5 3

11 points. Bid two spades.

North, one spade; East, double; South, pass; West holds:

♠ 7 5 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ A Q J 7 6 2 ♣ 5 4

11 points. Bid three diamonds.

With 14 points or more, bid a game in a suit or no-trumps; or cue-bid opponents' suit if the proper game contract is in doubt—say, when you hold four cards in each major and partner has doubled in a minor. This cue-bid may be made with two, or even three, cards in opponents' suit: it is a force to game and nothing more.

Responses in No-trumps

With one or more stoppers in opponents' suit, it is often advisable to respond in no-trumps. This is always a strength-showing bid and should never be used merely because responder's only length is in opponents' suit.

To respond with one no-trump, a player should have about 7 points with two probable stoppers in opponents' suit, or eight points with one stopper (sometimes only a partial stopper, such as J x x). A fair four-card major suit should usually be preferred to one no-trump, but one no-trump should be preferred to a short minor-suit response.

For example, North, one heart; East, double; South, pass; West holds:

♠ 8 6 ♥ Q J 9 5 (3) ♦ A 4 3 (4) ♣ 7 5 4 2

7 points. Bid one no-trump.

♠ 7 5 ♥ Q 9 4 3 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ Q 7 6 5

8 points. Bid one no-trump.

♠ Q 10 7 6 (2) ♥ K J 5 (4) ♦ Q 6 4 3 (3) ♣ 8 5

9 points. Bid one spade.

With 12 or 13 points and a sure stopper in opponent's suit, respond with two no-trumps.

For example, North, one diamond; East, double; South, pass; West holds:

♠ 7 5 3 ♥ K Q 4 (5) ♦ Q J 10 6 (3) ♣ K J 7 (4)

12 points. Bid two no-trumps; this bid, though very encouraging, is not forcing.

The Penalty Pass

Passing partner's take-out double is justifiable only with a strong trump holding. With five trumps, they should be so strong that a trump lead from partner would be welcome. The leave-in of a double of one in a suit suggests that partner *should* open a trump. With almost any six trumps, a leave-in is likely to be best, unless there is, in addition, some strength in another suit.

As a leave-in is always a possibility (though the doubler himself rarely hopes for that outcome), the doubler should be prepared for this eventuality. Consequently, it is best to avoid doubling, so far as possible, with a void in the opponents' suit. Some such hands offer no satisfactory alternative to doubling, but where some other bid is reasonably satisfactory, it should be chosen.

Examples. North, one heart; East, double; South, pass; West holds:

♠ 7 5 ♥ Q J 10 9 6 ♦ K 4 ♣ Q 5 3 2

Pass. One heart doubled will probably be as profitable to East-West as any other contract, but with a small diamond instead of the King, bid two clubs.

Same bidding; West holds:

♠ 8 ♥ A 10 7 5 4 3 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ 5 4 3

Pass. One heart may be made, but no East-West contract is likely to be preferable.

When Opponent Intervenes

Consider this sequence:

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	Double	Redouble	?

If opener's partner redoubles, and responder (West, here) has a bad hand, his main concern should be to get his side out of the trap at the cheapest contract possible. Consequently, a bid over the redouble does not necessarily show strength. This is particularly true if the bid is made in the lowest-ranking escape suit possible. However, a bid in this situation does tend to show a five-card suit, or at least a strong four-card suit.

Examples. North, one spade; East, double; South, redouble; West holds:

♠ 7 4 3 2 ♥ 5 ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ Q 10 5 4 3

Bid two clubs. This tells partner that this will be the best 'out' if he has three or more clubs; and the bid protects partner if his suit is hearts.

Same bidding; West holds:

♠ 7 5 ♥ J 7 6 4 2 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ 6 5 3

Pass. Partner may get out in clubs or diamonds. The heart suit can always be bid later, if it seems desirable.

If a *good* hand is held—10 points or more—it is therefore necessary to jump one trick to inform partner of this strength.

When the second opponent bids, any bid by the doubler's partner shows some strength—about 8 points with a fairly good suit.

For example, North, one club; East, double; South, one heart; West holds:

♠ A 7 6 5 3 (5) ♥ 6 4 2 ♦ Q J 7 (3) ♣ 5 3

8 points. Bid one spade.

♠ 6 5 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ A K 7 5 2 (8) ♣ 6 5 4

8 points. Bid two diamonds.

Overcall in Opponents' Suit

(A cue-bid)

This bid is in effect a gigantic take-out double and indicates that a game can be scored with only slight distributional support from partner. It is usually made on a hand with a void or singleton in opponents' suit and powerful support for any suit partner may bid; but it may also be used with a powerful two-suiter, or a one-suited hand with nine sure tricks in a major suit. About 22 points are usually necessary for this bid. With a void in opponents' suit or a strong two-suiter, the requirements may be shaded as low as 20 points.

For example, North, one heart; East, two hearts. East holds:

♠ A Q J 6 (7) ♥ 5 ♦ A K 4 3 (8) ♣ K Q J 6 (7)

22 points.

♠ A Q 6 5 3 (7) ♥ — ♦ A K J 7 4 (10) ♣ A 5 3 (4)

21 points.

♠ A K Q J 6 3 (12) ♥ 5 4 ♦ A 7 (4) ♣ K Q J (6)

22 points.

The cue-bid in opponents' suit is usually carried to game, but may be dropped short of game if the responding hand

is hopelessly weak. But the cue-bidder may *force* to game by a jump bid or a second cue-bid at his next turn.

SUMMARY

Take-out Doubles

A double of a suit-bid is to be interpreted as a take-out double if:

1. Partner has not previously taken any action (bid, double, re-double).
2. It is made at doubler's first opportunity.
3. The doubled bid is not more than three in a suit, or one no-trump.

I. The take-out double is used most often immediately following opponents' opening bid. The requirements in that case are:

1. A hand with as many points (in the proper type of valuation) as an opening bid—13 or more points.
2. Support for all unbid suits or a strong rebiddable suit. When support for all unbid suits is held, the hand should be valued as though it is a dummy for partner. When the hand contains a re-biddable suit, it should be valued as declarer's hand, as to points, and as an overcaller's as to winners.
3. Regardless of the method of point-count valuation, a minimum of 10 points in high cards is necessary.

A double of a one no-trump bid is always a (co-operative) penalty double. A double of a higher no-trump bid is strictly for penalties.

II. The take-out double may be used as a re-bid by opener. For example, after your opening, an opponent over-

called and your partner passed. On your next turn you double *for a take-out*. The requirements are:

1. Support in the unbid suits.
2. A minimum of 16 points. After *both* opponents have bid, the requirements are the same as in I, except that 2 more points are needed.

In all take-out doubles the probable level of partner's reply must be considered. Whenever the bidding is such that he must reply at the two-level or higher, the minimum point requirements must be stiffened by about 2 points or more. Whenever partner's probable response is at the one-level, the given point requirements are adequate, and may even occasionally be shaded a point or two.

When you are vulnerable, you should never shade your take-out doubles, and should usually have a little over the minimum.

Responding to Take-out Doubles

If partner doubles an opponent's suit bid for a take-out and the next opponent passes:

Do not pass, unless you have length (usually at least five cards, occasionally four), and strength (usually three sure winners, occasionally two) in opponents' suit.

Do not pass, even with required holding in opponents' suit, when your hand is strong enough to produce an almost sure game; except when a penalty pass definitely promises to result in a bigger profit for your side.

Bid: Your longest suit at the lowest possible level (0–11 points).

Jump in your longest suit, or in no-trumps (11 or more points).

Bid one no-trump (7–10 points).

When bidding no-trumps, the opponents' suit should be stopped—or, at the very least, partially stopped.

If there is a choice between suit-bids, or between a suit-bid and a no-trump bid, favour the major suit.

If your right-hand opponent makes a bid over your partner's double, pass with fewer than 6 points. With 6 or 7 points, bid a conditionally biddable suit if you can do it at the one-level. With more than 7 points, proceed as though opponent had not bid.

If your right-hand opponent redoubles, proceed in the same way as though he had made a bid, except that if partner's rescue bid is apt to turn out disastrously, bid a five-card suit of your own with as little as 4 points.

CHAPTER XVII

Penalty Doubles

A New Point-Count Rule for Penalty Doubles[1]

Heretofore all point-count methods have been sadly inadequate in the most important field of contract bridge—the strategy and tactics of penalty doubles. They either evaded the issue or naïvely assumed that the requirement of two 'quick' tricks for opening bids would solve the problem of penalty doubles. A player's game when based on such assumptions is like a man with a lame leg.

The new point-count rule for penalty doubles given below is a decisive step toward the solution of the problem. While it is true that no point-count method could be devised to supersede the honour-trick method in the handling of penalty doubles, this new rule approaches the precision (but not the flexibility) of the honour-trick method and will be of benefit not only to average players but to advanced players and even experts as well.

Against opponents' contracts, the most important consideration is the length and strength in their trump suit. Queens and Knaves in side-suits, furthermore, lose much of their value against opponents' suit-bids.

[1] The principal credit for this excellent rule is due to my associate, Theodore A. Lightner, who is not only one of the four or five best players in the world but also one of the greatest theorists of the game.

PENALTY DOUBLES

The following formula, involving a slight modification of the point-count, takes these two issues into consideration and affords an accurate guide in penalty doubles:

A.....4 points
K.....3 points
Q.....1 point
Four cards in opponents' suit.....1 point
Five cards in opponents' suit..... 2 points
Each sure trick in trumps.....3 points
A probable trick in trumps.....2 points
A possible trick in trumps.....1 point
Four cards in partner's suit—*deduct* 2 points.
Count trump length *in addition to* tricks in trumps.

Count high cards in trumps, either by above count or as trick winners, whichever is higher. Thus, Ace of trumps is 4 points rather than 3, but it is not 7.

If your partner opened with one in a suit, or made a take-out double, credit him with 10 points. If he opened with one no-trump, credit him with 13 points. If he merely overcalled or responded to your opening, credit him with 6 points. Add the total of your points to partner's. Twenty points in all is a sound double of a contract of three, or of a contract of two clubs or two diamonds (a 'light' double, as it doesn't risk game). Twenty-three points is a good double of any contract of one, or a contract of two hearts or two spades. The latter are 'tight' doubles, as the loss is a severe one if the contract is fulfilled—the opponents score a game.

The value of a side suit Queen is reduced to 1 point and the Knave is disregarded, because these cards cannot be counted on as probable winners against opponents' suit-bids. Tricks in trumps, however, are sure winners and are

valued accordingly; mere length in the trump suit is of considerable value, and points are assigned for this.

A 'sure' trick in trumps is one which is almost certain to make. A probable trick is one which will make well over half the time. A possible trick is one which will make some of the time.

For example, K x x behind the bid may be counted 3 points, although it is not absolutely certain—the Ace may turn up in the dummy.

Q x x behind the bid counts 2 points—a probable trick. for J x x, count 1 point—a possible trick. It will make on an over-ruff, or if partner has the Queen or King.

With K 10 x x, the 10 is a probable trick. Count it as 2 points. With K 9 x x, the 9 is a possible trick. It will make on an over-ruff, or if partner has the ten or Knave. So count the nine for 1 point.

Regardless of the count, a penalty double should not ordinarily be made on fewer than three trumps (including a probable trick) at the two- or three-level. At the one-level, at least *four* strong trumps should be held, and usually such a double should have five trumps.

Four cards in partner's suit is a disadvantageous holding for a penalty double, especially at the one- or two-level. A 2 point deduction is in order, and such a double is usually inadvisable in any case where four *strong* cards of partner's suit are held. Even three cards in partner's suit are a contra-indication.

The count will indicate clearly whether a player has the values to defeat an opponent's bid. However, it does not follow that a double is always the proper call merely because the count indicates that opponents' contract can be broken. There are two situations where the double should not be employed:

First: The probable return from the double should be compared to the profit which can be expected if the hand is played at your own best bid. If the latter profit is the greater, it is, of course, better to bid than to double. As an obvious example, it would be very foolish to double an opponent's non-vulnerable overcall if a slam of your own were in prospect. Even a vulnerable game should be preferred to a penalty unless a 500 penalty is certain, with a chance for 700.

Second: In doubling, as in other phases of bidding, it is essential to look forward to what may develop in later rounds of bidding. Thus, it is not enough merely to be sure of setting the present contract, because a double of one suit suggests to partner that a double of a new suit would be welcome. A proper double, therefore, should have about 6 points in high cards as part of the count. Otherwise, the hand is so weak in high card strength that any positive action is inadvisable. The opponents are likely to have the better hand, and may arrive at a makeable contract which partner may be induced to double.

For example, you hold:

♠ 7 ♥ Q J 10 9 5 2 ♦ J 4 3 ♣ 6 4 3

Partner bids a spade and the next opponent overcalls with two hearts. Four trump tricks count 12, plus 2 for length: 14 points. This, added to partner's 10 points, totals 24—enough to beat the contract. However, to double would be folly, as the hand is no good for anything except hearts. Pass, and see how the bidding develops. There is still a possibility of playing two hearts doubled. If the next opponent passes, partner may be strong enough to double for a take-out, and then you will of course pass for a penalty.

Or suppose you hold:

♠ 7 3 ♥ Q J 10 6 4 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ 6 5 3

One spade by partner, two hearts by the next hand. This hand counts 14—9 for three trump tricks, 2 for the five-card length, and 3 for the King. However, due to high-card weakness, a pass is still the best decision. With the Ace of diamonds instead of the King, you have a sound double.

Examples of Penalty Doubles

South, one spade; West, two hearts. North holds:

♠ A 7 (4) ♥ Q 10 5 3 (6) ♦ K 6 5 (3) ♣ 7 5 4 2

13 points. This is a minimum 'tight' double—23 points in all. The 6 points in hearts are arrived at as follows: Four cards in trumps, 1 point; the Queen is a trick with three guards, 3 points; and the ten is a probable second trick, 2 points.

South, one spade; West, two diamonds. North holds:

♠ A 7 (4) ♥ Q 6 3 2 (3) ♦ Q 9 5 4 (3) ♣ 7 5 4

10 points. This is a fair 'light' or 'free' double. Opponents may make their contract but the loss won't be much.

Or take this bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 NT	Pass	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	Pass	?	

North holds:

♠ K 5 2 ♥ J 9 7 6 ♦ K 10 4 2 ♣ 5 3

10 points. North should double two hearts. Partner must have at least two hearts to an honour, so the Knave is worth a trick—it cannot be picked up—3 points. 1 point for the four trumps.

Partner has 13 points. This makes 23 points. (The North hand was slightly too weak for a raise to two no-trumps—7 points.)

Another example. The bidding goes:

South	West	North	East
1 ♦	2 ♣	Double	Pass
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	Pass
?			

South holds:

♠ 10 6 4 2 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ A K 7 6 ♣ 4 3

South has 13 doubling points against spades.

North has 10 points, but of course only against clubs. However, he has indicated preparedness to help against other contracts and his club tricks should develop at spades, due to South's shortness in clubs. South should double. The four-card spade length and the shortness in clubs are the keys to the hand.

Procedure by Doubler's Partner

When partner doubles an opposing contract of one or two, it is important for the opening bidder to consider carefully whether or not he should permit the double to stand. Partner's double should not be regarded as sacrosanct, to be left in under all conditions; on the contrary, the opener should consider what action *his* hand calls for.

By far the most important factor in this decision is the number of trumps held. Two trumps may be considered as normal. This is a satisfactory holding, and usually the double should not be 'disturbed.' The only exceptions are: (*a*) a two-suited hand, without many top cards or, of course, even more freakish distributions; or (*b*) a six-card or longer suit, with most of the strength concentrated in that suit. With three trumps the double should be left in irrespective

of the rest of the hand. A singleton or void is unfavourable for the double. This is a point not understood by many players. They reason that it *is* favourable, because partner will have that many more trumps. Actually, the proper reasoning is that *dummy* will have that many more, and hence will afford declarer considerable support. It can easily be seen that the odds favour this, because 5–4–3–1 distribution of a suit is much more frequent than the 5–5–2–1. Even if partner has five or six trumps, the set may not be so severe as might be expected. After declarer has been ruffed a few times, the doubler is likely to find himself end-played in trumps. It is true, of course, that where partner holds some solid holding in trumps, such as Q J 10 x x or K Q J 10 x, it will prove a mistake to have taken out the double. However, a loss must be accepted in these rare cases so as to get good results on the average and to let partner double safely with less powerful holdings.

The disadvantage of a void in trumps is so great that the opener should start with the idea that of course he is going to take the double out, but first he will stop and consider whether his hand has sufficient *favourable* features to make him change his mind. If his values consist of top cards, i.e., A K's or A Q's, and will probably produce four tricks, it will be safe to let the double stand.

From a point-count view, the opener knows that partner is depending on him for 10 doubling points (A = 4, K = 3, Q = 1). Consequently, opener should evaluate his hand on this basis and deduct 4 points for a void in trumps, or 2 points for a singleton. (For three trumps he may take a 2-point credit.) If his total drops below 8 points, the hand is unsuitable for the double.

South holds:

♠ A 10 7 6 2 ♥ — ♦ A K 5 4 ♣ A 5 4 3

The bidding goes: South, one spade; West, two hearts; North, double; East, pass. South has 15 doubling points, less 4 for the void, leaving 11—a satisfactory margin. The double may be left in.

Or South may have:

♠ K Q J 7 2 ♥ — ♦ A 5 4 3 ♣ Q J 6 4

The bidding is the same. Now South has 9 doubling points, less 4 for the void, leaving only 5—much too little support for partner. South should bid two spades. Give South the Queen of diamonds in place of a small one, and three diamonds would be the proper bid. The added Queen would only provide 1 more doubling point, and 6 points would still be inadequate support for the double.

A singleton trump is also an undesirable holding, but not so bad as a void. With a six-card suit, or a two-suited hand or more freakish distribution, a take-out is indicated. However, with normal distribution (5–4–3–1 or 4–4–4–1) the double may be left in if the strength is mainly in top cards. If the hand has 9 doubling points after deducting 2 for the singleton, a leave-in is all right.

South holds:

♠ A J 5 4 3 ♥ 8 ♦ A K 2 ♣ J 7 6 4

The bidding goes: South, one spade; West, two hearts; North, double; East, pass. South has 11 points, less 2 for the singleton = 9. He cannot feel enthusiastic about the double. But his 9 points (three top tricks) should be sufficient to beat the contract. South has no better place to go.

On the same bidding South holds:

♠ K Q 10 6 4 ♥ 2 ♦ A 7 5 3 ♣ Q J 4

South has 9 doubling points (A = 4, K = 3, two Q's = 2, total = 9, less two for the singleton = 7). This is inadequate support for partner. South should bid two spades. Even though this bid may not suit partner, it is better than risking the two-heart double.

Where the doubled contract is two hearts or a higher contract (a tight, not a light double), it may be left in with slightly less support, as partner guarantees greater strength than for a free double (two clubs or diamonds or any bid of one).

Where partner has doubled a contract of three, it should only be taken out when the hand is highly unsuitable, and a reasonably safe landing-spot is assured.

Doubles of Contracts of Four or More

When the contract is four or higher, it is obviously much easier to decide what tricks you are likely to take than to count points.

Doubles of such contracts are not 'free' doubles; on the contrary, they may turn out to be very expensive if redoubled. Consequently it is best to follow the Culbertson rule for such doubles: there should be a probability of setting the contract two tricks. The odds in scoring are so much against the doubler that the risk should not be taken for a mere 50 or 100 points. Furthermore, a double should not be ventured if it might help declarer make his contract. Of course, a double for a one-trick set is all right if virtually certain tricks are held—for instance:

♠ K Q J ♥ A 5 4 3 ♦ A 2 ♣ 7 5 4 3

This is obviously a sound double of four spades. But change the trump holding to K Q x; this would be an un-

sound double, even behind the bidder, if his partner had raised. The Ace might easily turn up in dummy.

When the bidding has been competitive, a player should always try to decide which side is defending; or to put it differently, which side has the better hand. Sometimes the strength may appear quite evenly distributed, but usually one side or the other will apparently hold a definite preponderance of strength. When the opponents have the better hand, double only with a practically certain set. The opponents may, perhaps, have misjudged the situation, but they expect to fulfil their contract, and a redouble is not improbable. Where your side appears to have the better hand, double more boldly. The opponents are pushing *you*, and should not be allowed to do so at little or no cost.

When the opponents have done all the bidding, many good players are sometimes inclined to make somewhat speculative doubles. No 'guarantees' ever go with this type of double, but players who wish to indulge in it (with less strength than indicated by the Culbertson rule) should listen carefully to the opponents' bidding. If their bidding has been strong and positive, a double is very risky except with sure setting tricks. If their bidding has been uncertain and halting, a severe loss from a redouble is unlikely (though not impossible).

Contrast these bidding sequences by opponents;

1. SOUTH	NORTH
1 ♠	2 ♦
2 NT	3 NT

Here the bidding is minimum throughout, consequently not necessarily strong. South might have a shaded re-bid of two no-trumps, and North might have pushed on with

only a fair response. A double of this bidding, however, would be very dangerous, for it is equally probable that South was just short of a three no-trump re-bid, and that North had a fine hand, though not enough to try for a slam.

2. South	North
1 ♠	2 ♦
2 ♠	3 NT

Here, obviously, the bidding is strong: a double would simply court a redouble.

3. South	North
1 ♦	1 ♠
2 ♦	2 ♠
2 NT	3 NT

Here it is apparent the opponents do not have surplus values. South was only strong enough to re-bid two diamonds, denying ability to bid three diamonds or two no-trumps. North was only able to re-bid two spades over two diamonds; this is not a strong re-bid and indicates decidedly limited values. Although opponents may make three no-trump, it is unlikely that they can redouble, and more unlikely that they can make overtricks.

4. South	North
1 ♦	1 ♠
1 NT	2 ♠
2 NT	3 NT

In this situation the opponents may be pressing, and probably do not have surplus values.

Procedure of Doubler's Partner

At a contract of four or five, a singleton or void in trumps should not be regarded as a liability.

At this level, doubles should be taken out only when the higher contract can almost certainly be made, and the probable penalty will not be enough to compensate; or when it seems likely opponents will fulfil their contract and the probable set at the higher contract will be only one trick, or possibly two, not vulnerable.

SUMMARY

PENALTY DOUBLES

Ace = 4 points
King = 3 points
Queen = 1 point

Four cards in opponents' suit .....1 point
Five cards in opponents' suit.....2 points
Each sure trick in trumps.....3 points
A probable trick in trumps.....2 points
A possible trick in trumps.....1 point
Four cards in partner's suit—*deduct* 2 points

Count trump length *in addition to* tricks in trumps.

Count high cards in trumps, either by above count or as trick winners, whichever is higher. Thus, Ace of trumps is 4 points.

If your partner opened with one in a suit, or made a take-out double, credit him with 10 points. If he opened with one no-trump, credit him with 13 points. If he merely

overcalled or responded to your opening bid, credit him with 6 points. Add the total of your points to partner's.

With 20 points you have a sound double of a contract of three, or of a contract of two clubs or two diamonds.

With 23 points you have a good double of any contract of one, or a contract of two hearts or two spades.

Background to Contract Bridge

By Albert Morehead

Note. Mr. Morehead is the outstanding authority on the history of contract bridge and other games. He is a former chairman and president of the American Contract Bridge League, bridge editor of *The New York Times*, and author of many books. As such he is eminently qualified to tell how the Culbertson System came about and what are the fundamental bids in contract bridge.—Editors.

Almost from the day that it became the favourite card game of millions throughout the world, contract bridge has been synonymous with the name Culbertson. In some countries the game is called simply 'Culbertson'. It is ironical to note that though so much of Ely Culbertson's recent efforts has been to create a system of international government, the most truly international of all laws is a different Culbertson law—the one applying to the bidding of bridge hands.

Only a handful of the millions of bridge players have any idea of the extent to which they are following 'Culbertson law' each time they play bridge—even when they think they are playing some other system! The younger players take for granted, as though they were axioms that have always existed, certain bidding principles that were unknown before Culbertson first expressed them, in some cases almost thirty years ago. There are older players who were around when Culbertson (then considered a dangerous radical in the game) produced his first innovations back in 1923, but most even of these have forgotten. It is all but incredible to most

players, even experts, that the following were unknown or unhonoured in the pre-Culbertson era:

The Bidding of Four-Card Suits. Introduced by Culbertson in 1923. Up to that time the minimum biddable suit had five cards and conservatives required that even a five-card suit contain at least one quick trick. Wilbur Whitehead, one of the great auction bridge authorities, wrote in the '20s: 'The introduction by Ely Culbertson of four-card suit bids is the greatest development of modern bridge.'

The Approach Principle. This has become so much a part of the game that it no longer occurs to anyone that the 'principle' requires a name at all. Yet before Culbertson, the 'cheaper" no-trump[1] was the undisputed king, and countless games were lost through lack of any effort to find a trump fit.

The Principle of Economy of Bids. It was Culbertson who first taught that the bidding should be kept low at the start. Previously, believe it or not, the object had been to keep the bidding high so that the opponents could not overcall. What Culbertson actually taught bridge players, including the experts, was that the first object of bidding is to double the opponents and collect penalties; that the side with the preponderant strength can afford to keep the bidding low; and that by keeping the bidding low, this side will either reach its own best contract or can double the opponents if they venture too high. Self-evident, you may say; but the fact remains that no one thought so in those days.

The Forcing Principle. This, like several of the other Culbertson discoveries, seems like something everyone has always known, but it was originated and developed by Culbertson in California in 1927–8, when it first became

[1] 'Cheaper' because this denomination requires fewer tricks for game.

apparent that contract bridge would replace auction. It remains the dominant principle of contract bridge and it would be hard to conceive to-day of a system in which there are no forcing bids. From the forcing principle Culbertson derived scores of new methods including the opening two-bid, forcing jump bids, the overcall-in-the-opponents'-suit-bid, cue-bids, and the many inferential forces that are now standard.

The Effect of Distribution on Bids. This is the least known, yet perhaps the most valuable, of Culbertson's contributions. Referring to Culbertson's discovery R. F. Foster observed, in *Modern Bridge Tactics* (1924): 'This matter of distribution has never been touched upon in any of the textbooks on auction, but I believe it will be the key to most of the bidding tactics of the future.' Twenty-eight years after the fact, it seems incredible that the effect of distribution on bids was unrecognized until one man came along and told the world about it. Yet such is the fact, and for a number of years Culbertson's was a voice crying in the wilderness. As late as 1927, there were still experts who considered him a crackpot because he would bid more on a 4–4–3–2 than on a 4–3–3–3, more on a 5–4–3–1 than on a 5–3–3–2. Milton Work, the senior prophet of auction bridge at that time, wrote, 'Bridge is a game of aces and kings.'

The Honour-Trick Table. Of course, bridge was not then a game of Aces and Kings, but it was Culbertson who introduced the honour-trick table that was more flexible and gave quick-trick importance to unsupported lower honours, as Queens, Knaves and tens; who first pointed out the fact that there are a limited number of honour-tricks and by the 'rule of eight' one can determine which side had the balance of power. Previously, even expert players had been guilty of such bidding absurdities as this:

South	West	North	East
1 no-trump	Double	Pass	2 no-trumps

—for it never occurred to East that if he could make two no-trumps, the penalty would be more valuable than the part-score, and that if he could make three no-trumps, the penalty would be more valuable than the game.

The Distributional Count. Culbertson's theories of distribution and balance of power led logically to the development of a method of counting actual winners at a given contract, which his wife, Josephine Culbertson, codified as the Distributional Count—still the most accurate way of valuing one's hand. This method, incidentally, later became the basis of the 4–3–2–1 point-count used by Charles Goren and a myriad others.

The 4–5 No-trump Slam Bids. Culbertson first had the idea of using the 4–5 no-trump level to show Aces wholesale. He published it in 1933. The first manuscript in which Easley Blackwood set forth his own theories presented them as 'a development based on Culbertson's new idea.' I know, because Blackwood sent that manuscript to me in 1934 for publication in *The Bridge World.*

The One-Over-One. Culbertson did not name this; Theodore Lightner did. But Culbertson thought of it first. In the magazine article, published in 1928, in which he first introduced the principle of the forcing bid, Culbertson gave a list of typical forcing situations—and look what led the list: 'One partner opens with a suit-bid of one, and the other partner responds with a suit-bid of one.' Yet within four years others were claiming the one-over-one as a bidding system of their own—different from Culbertson's!

The list could be continued indefinitely. It would also include some impractical bids, proposed and soon aban-

doned; some good bids (like the Asking Bids) that were technically successful but psychologically unacceptable to the mass of bridge players; and a host of bidding methods that were inescapable consequences of the basic principles, and that anybody might have thought of—given Culbertson's fundamental principles and specifics as a starting point. The fact remains that contract bridge to-day would be impossible without the theories and practical methods discovered and developed by Ely Culbertson.

I have written the foregoing because I think there has been of late too much tendency to overlook Culbertson's contributions, and to give other names to systems that are anywhere from seventy-five per cent to ninety per cent the Culbertson System. But two facts must be made clear: Ely Culbertson is not the only man who has made important contributions to contract bridge as it is played to-day; and his genius did not create the Culbertson System all by itself.

Who created the Culbertson System? As with most dynamic concepts, it is the joint creation of a single mind and of a collective mind. The System embodies the traditions and accumulated experience of whole generations of card players. In the course of its development, all the best minds of contract bridge contributed to it—those who were friendly or associated with Culbertson and worked with him, and also those who were unfriendly and trying to produce superior systems of their own. Theirs was the collective mind. The single mind was Culbertson's, and it was essential. It is still essential. A committee cannot write a poem or compose a symphony—or create a system. Some dominant individual must be present to create, prod, suggest, and integrate. No one who was around at the time can doubt that in the case of contract bridge science, that individual was Culbertson.

The talent for organisation is a rare one and an indefinable one. I am not sure just why Culbertson has it (though surely I know him as well as anyone does); I know only that he has it. Bertrand Russell, the Nobel Prize winner, recently wrote about him: 'The most remarkable man I ever knew——and I do not play bridge.' Somehow, Culbertson not only introduced a system but also organised another system to keep it in a continuous stage of growth and improvement.

There is an unfortunate tendency of bridge writers, especially in America, to overlook the preponderant portion of their systems that is pure Culbertson, or at least to give no credit to the original authors of the Culbertson System. In some cases they even convey an impression that the use of a point-count involves the abandonment of the Culbertson System in spite of the fact that his most recent achievement is the development of remarkable, simple and accurate point-count.

A proper ethical code in any field of endeavour requires that due credit be given to anyone whose original ideas are used, borrowed, or extended. This is not a legal matter, for ideas cannot be copyrighted (and it is proper that they should not be: ideas should be the property of all). Hence, acknowledgment of the contribution of others is a debt of honour.

In the case of bridge, it is elementary fair play to Culbertson and his lifework, to which he has devoted more than thirty years, and to the many others—writers, players and teachers—who have been associated with him from time to time during that period. Yet in a recent book I find credit to Culbertson *only* for devising the 4–5 no-trump convention. In some other books I find no mention of Culbertson's name, though they deal largely with bids and methods originated by Ely Culbertson. Absence of credit in these

books is, I feel sure, unintentional. Nevertheless, the beginning bridge player of to-day might pardonably get the idea that the authors of these books had originated and perfected a beautiful and harmonious system of contract-bridge—a work of genius.

To repeat, the Culbertson System is not the property of Ely Culbertson or any other individual. The authors of other bridge books have every right to write about it. It belongs to the players of the world. But the players themselves, millions of them, give credit to the man primarily responsible for it, Ely Culbertson. In adding a personal tribute to this latest book of his, I also wanted to make sure that this credit goes to the man to whom it is due.

ALBERT MOREHEAD

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